

Clash of Cultures?

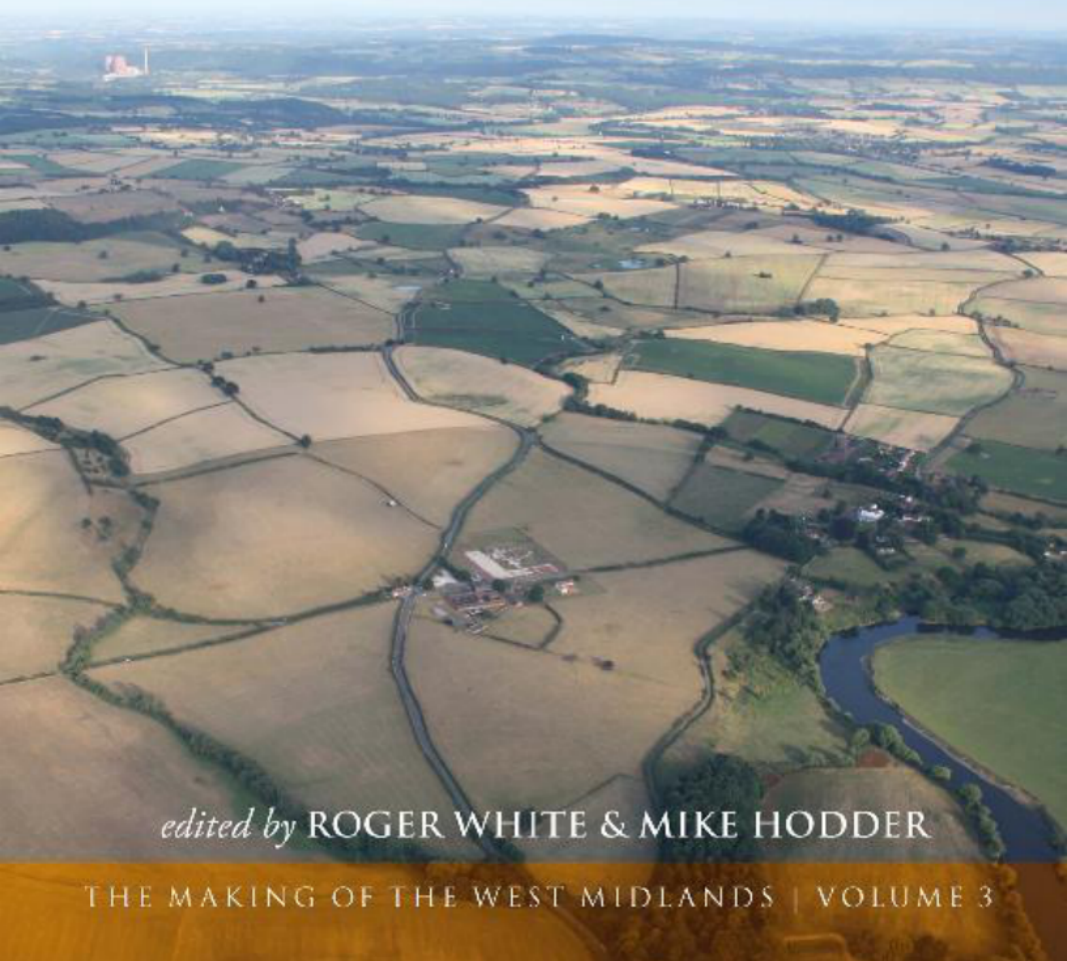
Roger White, Mike Hodder

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CLASH *of* CULTURES?

The Romano-British period in the West Midlands



edited by ROGER WHITE & MIKE HODDER

THE MAKING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS | VOLUME 3

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THE MAKING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

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THE ROMANO-BRITISH PERIOD IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Edited by

ROGER WHITE AND MIKE HODDER

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Front cover: Wroxeter Roman City and the River Severn looking south east, towards Wenlock Edge and the Ironbridge Gorge. Photograph: Roger White

Back cover: One of a pair of Iron Age spoons found near Ellesmere, Shropshire (HESH -9A4B83). Photograph: British Museum creative commons licence.

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Preface

Roger White and Mike Hodder

The aims of the West Midlands Archaeological Research Framework, as concisely summarised by Sarah Watt (2011, xiv), are to ‘provide a viable, realistic and effective academic basis for undertaking archaeological intervention’. The work was funded by English Heritage (now Historic England) as part of a national initiative, and consisted of a *Resource Audit* followed by a *Research Assessment*. Following period-based seminars, a multi-period and multi-themed publication has already been produced (Watt 2011). The present volume is one of a period-specific series, which includes early prehistoric (Garwood 2007) and late prehistoric (Hurst 2017).

Most of the chapters in this volume originated as papers which were presented at a seminar held in Shrewsbury on 30 October 2002 and were subsequently published as summaries on the project’s website. With the passage of time it has inevitably, for various reasons, not been possible to include all papers presented at the seminar. However, the opportunity has been taken to thoroughly update papers so that they include reference to fieldwork and other research that has taken place since the seminar and to publications that have appeared since then; to expand some papers to ensure that the coverage of this volume is geographically, even if not thematically, comprehensive; and to include new papers. Aspects of this volume complement and augment *The Roman Rural Settlements Project* which began in 2012 and is an important national initiative to ‘research both unpublished and published sources to write a new account of the rural settlement of Roman Britain’, making use of data derived from developer-funded works but available only as grey literature reports (Blick *et al.* 2015; Smith *et al.* 2016).

Bringing together the present collection of papers creates an opportunity to revisit Simon Esmonde Cleary’s assessment (2011) in

the overall West Midlands research framework publication in the light of an enhanced regional dataset and current thinking on the period in general. The distribution map in his paper was derived from local authority Historic Environment Record (HER) data provided in 2002. Since then, the quality as well as the quantity of data held in HERs has increased and new data have been largely, though not exclusively, derived from development-based and developer-funded projects, reflecting the continuation of something of a boom period for archaeological activity in the region that started with the adoption of PPG16 in 1990 and gathered pace through a combination of economic growth and increased local authority archaeological provision (Pitts and Thomas 2015). Projects have been undertaken in both rural and urban areas but the quantity varies between different parts of the region, reflecting the extent of new development and the response of local authorities to its impact on the archaeological resource. In addition to fieldwork, backlog post-excavation work and publication have been undertaken. Economic recession has resulted in some reduction in development-based projects since 2008, making this an opportune time to review and take stock of current knowledge, but a recent upsurge in development (which includes major infrastructure works such as high-speed rail, extensive residential and other development on greenfield land, and extraction of the aggregates required for all of these), combined with a significant reduction in local authority archaeological provision, introduces an urgency for provision of an academic basis for archaeological intervention as set out in the Research Framework's aims.

The editors would like to thank the authors of chapters presented here and everyone involved in the Research Framework's process for their patience and persistence in the extremely long gestation period of this volume. In particular we would single out Cath Buxton, Ian George, Dan Miles and Lisa Moffett of English Heritage / Historic England who funded the whole exercise and have been extremely patient in awaiting the results. Additionally, we would also like to thank former colleagues at Birmingham Archaeology and the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity (now Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Birmingham). In particular we would single out Harry Buglass, who on his retirement was kind enough to recommend his daughter, Lou, to complete the maps used in this

volume, thus perpetuating the family tradition. This work would not have been remotely possible without the support of the local authority archaeologists, including Historic Environment Record managers and archivists, for finding time in their schedules to deal with our queries. We would also like to thank all those who participated in the original seminar. We are grateful to Sarah Watt for organising the seminar and subsequent discussion group and for coaxing authors into producing the summaries for the website which formed the basis of this volume.

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The archaeology of the Romano-British West Midlands: overview and research priorities

Roger White and Mike Hodder

Introduction

This volume is largely ordered geographically, in terms of the modern counties of the region, reflecting the origin of the data which are ultimately derived from the HERs of the respective counties. It also reflects the fact that many of the original authors, or contributors, of these papers are (or were) local authority archaeologists. Naturally, this imposes inherent biases which will be discussed below. The county papers start with Warwickshire, and proceed clockwise through Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and lastly the former county of West Midlands in the centre of the region. The remaining papers follow more thematic approaches, considering the study area as a whole. These include papers on the Roman army and the fifth and sixth centuries which bookend the work so as to provide transition to the late Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon / Early Medieval period volumes that precede and follow the period under research. The remaining papers deal with artefactual evidence, notably pottery, coins and lastly, the topic of religion. Environmental and other scientific evidence is addressed across the papers rather than as a single study. It is fair to say that, were we to do this exercise today, we would have gone about it in a very different manner, but this method at least has the merit of consistency with the other volumes in the series, allowing readers to trace issues within each

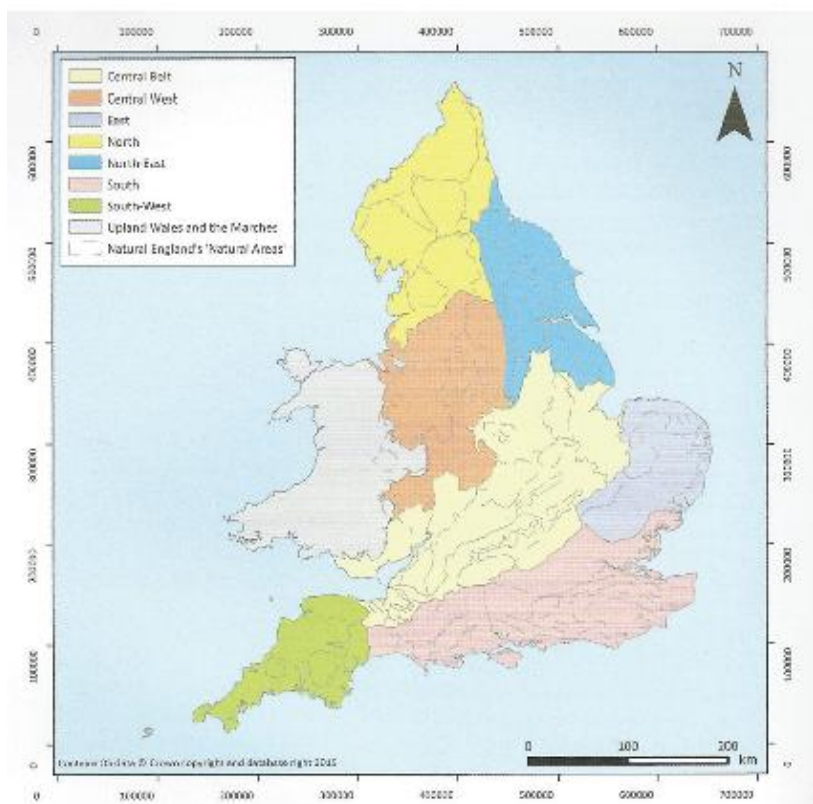
county across the defined research periods.

In attempting any sort of overview at the outset of the study, an essential starting point is Simon Esmonde Cleary's chapter in the 2011 research framework volume (Esmonde Cleary 2011) which emphasised that the evidence for the West Midlands must be considered on its own terms and in response to the nature of the region itself, highlighting resource mobilisation, tradition and innovation. In a broader context he saw resource procurement as the major characteristic of the region in the Roman era, with mineral, agricultural and human resources all being exploited, a relationship that can only be considered as fundamentally colonial. Failure to acknowledge this is to ignore the nature of the relationship between Rome and its Empire (Mattingley 2006). In this, the Roman period is, of course, different from all other periods of British history. This chapter identifies some general themes arising from the papers presented in this volume which provide an opportunity to test this model, and puts forward priorities for future work which are applicable across the region as a whole. Additionally, for ease of reference, the research priorities drawn from each paper are tabulated here ([Table 1.1](#)).

Selections and biases

As has been noted already, the premise of this volume – to look at the Roman era in a particular region of the UK (and specifically England) – sets up inevitable biases in making sense of the data. The most obvious one, the fact that data are collated and stored by modern counties, has been noted already and does pose challenges for our comprehension in that we have no means of telling whether these boundaries relate in any shape or form to those of the Roman era. Indeed, we must assume that they do not. Even though we can suggest vaguely where territorial boundaries may have lain in the Roman period, as many authors of the papers here will do, we cannot have any confidence in their accuracy. The question of how to relate data to landscape in the Roman period has been tackled on a national scale by both the Fields of Britannia project (Rippon *et al.* 2015) and the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project (Smith *et al.* 2016) whose approaches have taken similar, and radically different, ways of organising their data. Basically, they have broken down the country

into geographically and agriculturally defined units, drawing on those identified by Roberts and Wrathmell's study of the medieval landscape of England and Wales (2000; 2002) but creating much larger units of study than was the case for the more closely defined medieval landscape project. In the case of the Fields of Britannia, nine units were determined across England (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 19–56), and for Rural Settlement of Roman Britain eight units, derived ultimately from Natural England's 'Natural Areas', were identified (Smith *et al.* 2016, 15–6). When comparing our study area with these two projects, the mismatch is striking ([Figure 1.1](#)): our one region turns into three under the Fields of Britannia criteria (Upland Wales, Western Lowlands, and Northern Uplands) and three under the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain criteria (Upland Wales and the Marches, Central West, and Central Belt). Potentially, combining the two models would result in six different regions, but with considerable overlap for two of the areas: Upland Wales / Upland Wales and the Marches, and Western Lowlands and Central West. This division and diversity of landscape character is, of course, picked up by our various contributors and we highlight it here not as a criticism but merely to demonstrate that the original premise of the research frameworks' project is predicated on modern needs rather than ancient realities and works better in some parts of England than in others.



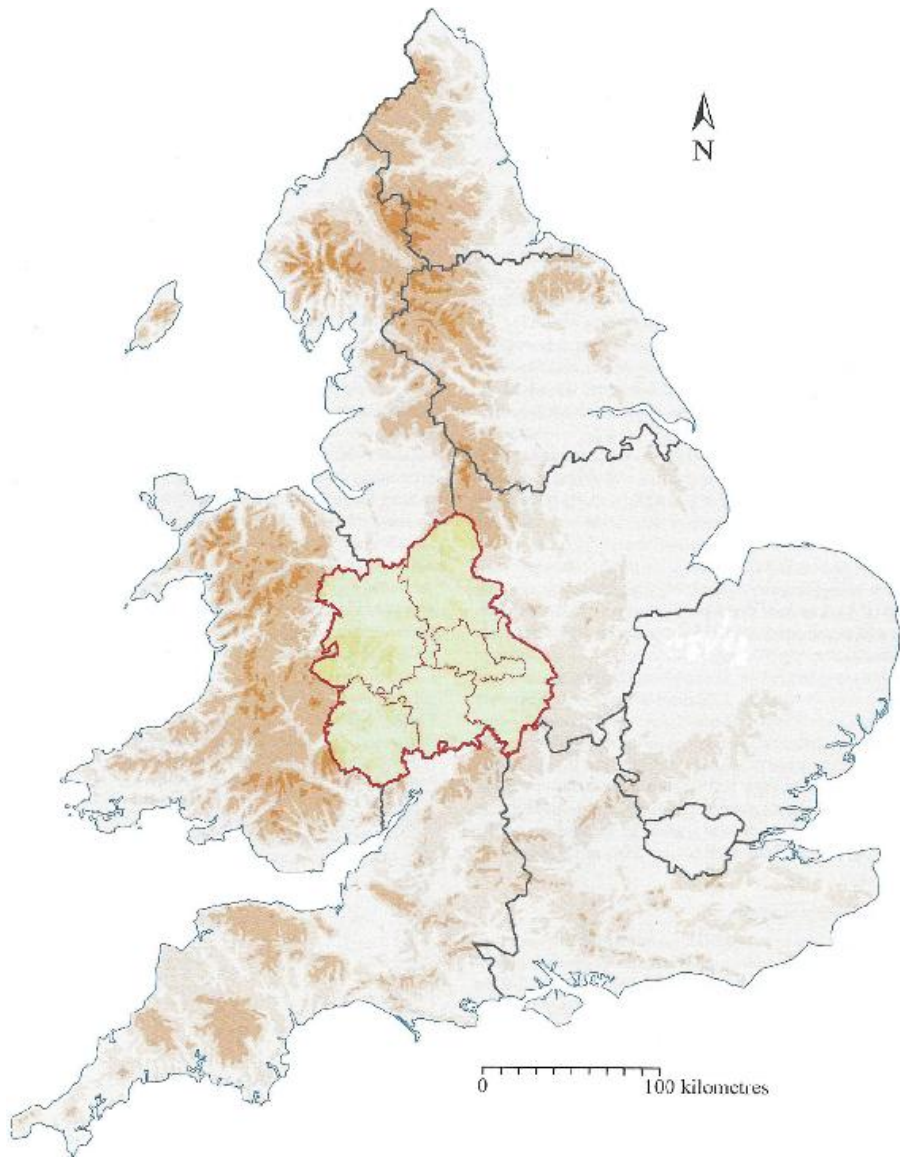


Figure 1.1 Comparison of defined regions within England and Wales. Previous page, top: Fields of Britannia (after Rippon et al. 2015, fig. 2.11); bottom: Rural Settlement of Roman Britain (after Smith et al. 2016, fig. 1.5) and, above, English Heritage / Historic England regions (after Hurst (ed.) 2017)

Table 1.1 Collated list of research priorities for the West Midlands Region

Region	Where possible, tie developer-funded work into previous excavations and research, especially if the site is unpublished or inadequately published
	• A clear programme of environmental sampling and dating needs to be articulated and applied to all developments to investigate landscape use and change over time

Army Prioritise the acquisition of environmental data to map impact of army, introduction of new species and species improvement through breeding/selection, etc.

- Use artefactual studies to seek economic links, technological developments and social change
 - Maximise the opportunity to obtain scientific dating and analysis of sediments/geochemical testing
 - Continuation of existing aerial photographic survey
 - Monitoring of Portable Antiquities Scheme data as a means of identifying new sites on land unresponsive to aerial survey
 - Focus on understanding later Roman army perhaps through a combination of survey technologies and approaches (e.g. geophysics, PAS data)
-

Worcestershire Continue to develop understanding of late Iron Age development and transition through the strongly developed ceramic profile of the county

- Seek to develop an understanding of areas of weakness, notably rural settlement and cemetery data
 - Take advantage of large-scale projects to advance a broader understanding of the period across the county
 - Continue to focus on site-specific issues for major and minor sites as a view to better understanding of their development
 - Seek to add to our relatively poor understanding of the relationship between villa and non-villa countryside, perhaps through landscape characterisation
 - Develop understanding of broader chronological trends
 - Continue to explore the nature of localised identity within the county in respect of the perceived tribal spheres of influence
 - Continue to explore the relationship between native and incoming populations at the end of the Roman era
-

Worcestershire Increase the coverage of the National Mapping Programme for the county to reflect the rich tradition of aerial photography over the past half century

- Focus on researching alluviation of river valleys to identify buried and well-preserved deposits through technologies such as LiDAR and specialised remote sensing collated within a GIS framework
- Use the approaches outlined above to carry out predictive modelling of high-quality sites with potential for scientific analysis, carried out in alliance with more conventional surface survey and controlled/supervised metal-detecting survey
- Seek opportunities to develop understanding of poorly dated periods of settlement, such as the settlement shift in the second century or at the end of the Roman period
- Assess the impact of Roman military on the county – is the evidence as slight as it appears to be?
- Seek to enhance understanding of the transport infrastructure of the region: what was the relationship between road and river transport, for instance?
- Continue to focus on developing an understanding of the nature and

development of urban settlements in the county, notably Worcester and Droitwich

- Explore the nature of rural settlement in relation to questions of Roman or native forms of settlement and the relationship between them
 - Continue to explore the nature and scale of industries in the county throughout the county in relation to technological developments
 - Through enhanced scientific analysis and programmes of environmental sampling, continue to explore the nature and character of agricultural production and consumption throughout the county
-

Herefordshire identify more military camps and forts and understand their chronologies better, particularly in the later first and early second century

- Use an enhanced programme of aerial survey with conventional surface survey and directed metal detecting to characterise and identify settlement
 - Focus on further work on the iron industry with a view to understanding more about its chronology and development from the Iron Age and into the Roman period. *Ariconium* is the key site for this
 - Kenchester is clearly of key significance in the region, particular given its suspected development as a later *civitas*. Further research is required to characterise the site's development and chronology, especially its later phases in relation to prestige sites in its hinterland
 - Seek to characterise rural settlements in the key river valleys of the region where sites within landscapes are beginning to be identified and explored
-

Shropshire further characterisation of Wroxeter should be undertaken through a programme of geochemical testing and geophysical survey

- The dating sequence at Wroxeter needs to be secured by radiocarbon dating of a statistically significant number of samples to ascertain the dates of the excavated phases and the date of abandonment
 - Work to characterise rural settlement away from the well-understood central Shropshire region. Key areas to prioritise include the south Shropshire hills and north Shropshire
 - Seek to understand in greater detail industrial aspects of Roman Shropshire, including in particular mining, quarrying and the iron industry. The ceramic building material industry also requires further characterisation through scientific analysis
-

Staffordshire information of the relationship between camps and forts, especially at Greensforge or Penkridge

- Nature and extent of civilian settlement outside forts and how these develop into later urban settlements
- Need to understand the wider landscape context of Wall so that the extensive research at the site can be put into context
- Establish the nature and character of the county in the immediate post-Roman period
- Research and characterise the nature and extent of resource exploitation during the Roman period
- Seek to understand the rural settlement pattern in more detail, particularly

the relationship between Romanised and native buildings and landscapes as well as geographical diversity (e.g. between east and west parts of the county)

- Commission palaeoenvironmental work to aid in reconstructing the environment of the period

West Midlands County Establish the routes of Roman roads since these bear a strong correlation with habitation sites and Roman settlement in general

- Undertake new aerial reconnaissance of open land within the conurbation to seek new sites, together with the use of LiDAR and conventional survey through fieldwalking
- Continue to monitor objects reported by the public found in their gardens or through the Portable Antiquities Scheme as these may represent sites
- Identify off-site deposits likely to contain environmental data

Religion Re-examine existing data from key sites (e.g. Wroxeter, Wall) to glean further understanding of the religious character of the region

- Explore the religious sites of the region through a landscape-focused analysis, perhaps using GIS as the primary research tool
- Attempt to identify and explore cemeteries and aspects of religion
- Seek evidence for religious belief as sites, portable antiquities and cemeteries

Pottery Seek to explore whether there is a correlation between tribal boundaries and pottery distributions, or other patterns that can be discerned through comparison of fabric groups and their distributions (e.g. the north-south divide between regions where pottery use is common and where it is not)

- Compare and contrast well-published assemblages to characterise social or economic patterns
- Seek to identify pottery production sites to explore technologies and developments over time, and publish as a matter of high priority those identified kiln sites that have not been fully published (e.g. Mancetter-Hartshill, which is of national importance)
- Apply scientific characterisation of clays through XRF and geochemical fingerprinting to source clays and production zones within the Severn Valley
- Use pottery forms to explore social patterns and cultural identities displayed through food consumption
- Make sure that assemblages resulting from all forms of archaeological intervention are fully researched and published, and that data are comparable through using common type and fabric series and means of quantifying data

Coins Continue to monitor and characterise coin finds from the region, especially through the Portable Antiquities Scheme

- Seek to incorporate existing large databases from excavated sites (e.g. Wroxeter)

Roman/English transition Opportunities for dating and environmental work as a means to understand the changes within the region during this time

- Where there is a suspicion of activity of this period, open up as large an

area as possible in order to capture the often ephemeral nature of the evidence

- Give appropriate weight to detailed analysis of the finds assemblage (cultural material and ecofacts of all forms) by using recognised specialists and by maintaining the highest standards of research through the application of scientific analysis
 - Prioritise wherever possible the recovery and full and comprehensive study of human remains using the full panoply of scientific methods now available (e.g. isotope analysis)
 - Be aware of the strong likelihood of settlement continuity within villages and other settlements across the region.
-

Exploiting the region

The sheer quantity of data now available, from the many sites investigated in rural Herefordshire to those discovered in the Birmingham conurbation, demonstrates the extent of exploitation of all parts of the region in the Roman period and enables us to characterise that exploitation to some extent. In Herefordshire, for example, the dataset is augmented by the identification on aerial photographs of many enclosures thought to be of Roman date (White 2003), mirroring the distribution known since the 1970s in Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and in Staffordshire by cropmarks of settlements, field enclosures and trackways on river gravels (Whimster 1989). This type of evidence is, of course, skewed to those areas whose soils produce the best visible cropmarks and which therefore have tended to be most flown, such as the Avon Valley in Warwickshire, and to enclosed rather than ‘open’ settlements. In the absence of further investigation, dating sites known solely as cropmarks is always going to be uncertain: some of the enclosures are likely to be of prehistoric rather than Roman date. For this reason, they have largely been excluded from the county maps in this volume, even at the risk of seriously under-stating the actual density of occupation during this period (Figure 1.2). Some idea of density can, however, now be gained from the mapping published by the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project (Smith *et al.* 2016, 44–74). Similarly, although some of the earthworks on limestone plateaux in the Staffordshire Peak District have been shown to be Romano-British farmsteads, settlements and field systems, others could be prehistoric.

Given the geographical and physiographic diversity noted above for the region, it is no surprise that the type and intensity of exploitation varies across the region. In Herefordshire the intensive nature of agricultural activity has been inferred from landscapes of enclosures, field systems and even ‘villages’, an intensity which echoes that seen in relation to Wroxeter in central Shropshire (Gaffney and White 2007, 237–78), while in Birmingham the sixteen or more roadside plots along Rykniel Street found at Longdales Road could be part of a more extensive layout (Jones *et al.* 2008). Geoarchaeological and environmental data may also provide proxy evidence for the intensity of activity, for example the flooding and bank erosion associated with Romano-British material in the Arrow valley in Herefordshire (White 2003) and sites buried under alluvium in Worcestershire in the early Roman period (Jackson *et al.* 2012).

There is little doubt that the Roman period represented an intensification in the exploitation of resources in the region, albeit not on the scale of the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century. In addition to the processing of brine at Droitwich and small-scale clay digging to supply pottery and tile kilns, identification of fossils attests the use of limestone from the Walsall area, and metallurgical analysis of slags suggests that iron ore from a local, but now completely worked-out deposit, rather than from the Forest of Dean, may have been smelted at Worcester (McDonnell and Swiss 2004, 376–8). Coal was certainly used in the region during the Roman period, as has long been known at Wroxeter, and in the Black Country it could easily be obtained from deposits close to the surface without the need for deep mining. The fort and settlement at Chesterton/Holditch in Staffordshire was probably related to the exploitation of coal, iron ore, lead and clay available in the immediate vicinity but as yet there is no evidence for extraction of these (Rogers and Garner 2007). In Shropshire, the workings at Linley Hill and the evidence for lead smelting to extract silver at nearby Pentrehyling (Allen *et al.* 2015; [Figure 1.3](#)) are graphic evidence for the state interest in local resources. In addition to those at Droitwich, salt deposits on Staffordshire Common were exploited in the medieval and post-medieval periods but there is currently no evidence for Roman exploitation. There is similarly no evidence for Roman lead mining in the Staffordshire part of the Peak District.

The availability of firewood and charcoal for fuel would be a major determinant in the location of pottery, iron and other industries. Wood was also required for domestic fuel and large quantities of timber would be needed for building. Woodland was another of the region's resources, but there is currently little evidence of how it was exploited or managed in the Roman period. However, the work on analysis of *-leah* (modern *-ley*) place-names in the Wroxeter area (White and Wigley, this volume) hints at one way in which we might begin to test the data and target further locations for study. We should be alert, however, to the difference between the exploitation and clearance of ancient woodland for timber in construction projects as opposed to the management of coppice woodland which must have been extensive throughout the region for both domestic and industrial uses. We must also make allowance for the existence of wood pasture, or hunting landscapes, within which woods, coppices and trees will have played their part. This landscape complexity was already ancient when the Romans arrived. Oliver Rackham attributes the distinction in Britain between 'Planned Countryside' and 'Ancient Countryside' to the Iron Age / Roman period, a dichotomy that persisted into the Middle Ages and beyond (Rackham 2006, 63; [Table 1.2](#)). It is a theory that is certainly worth testing through research into pollen and place-name evidence where possible.

Character of settlements and landscapes

It is clear from environmental evidence that there had already been extensive clearance of woodland before the Roman occupation. This is attested in Herefordshire where palaeoenvironmental evidence indicates an open landscape with both pasture and arable, while in Worcestershire the extent of tree cover was low throughout the Roman period. In the same county, deep alluvium created by earlier de-forestation is cut by Roman features of second-century date, while in the Carrant Brook valley, alluvial accumulation is seen also in the early Roman period. At Ryall Quarry, Ripple in Worcestershire, however, Roman deposits are buried under alluvium suggesting that in places de-forestation intensified in the Roman period (Barber and Watts 2008). This picture is not uniform, however; some areas of the Severn Valley flood plain were only cleared of woodland in post-

Roman to medieval times and in Shropshire ancient woodlands survived, especially along Wenlock Edge and in the Wyre Forest.

The region was not a villa-dominated landscape (Smith *et al.* 2016, 33–4). The few villas known in Warwickshire, from excavated evidence and identification of flue tiles in surface collection, seem to cluster around Alcester and Chesterton. Similarly, relatively few villas are known in Worcestershire, and they are mainly on the gravel terraces south of the Avon. House plans are used as criteria for the identification of a site as a villa but other buildings in the county were constructed using Roman-style materials. A few villas have been identified in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire, and some high-status settlements, possibly villas, have been identified around Coventry from surface finds of roof tiles and tesserae. Around Bredon Hill there was extensive use of stone for buildings or at least for wall footings. Most structures in rural settlements were probably timber-framed, on sill beams or padstones, or constructed of cob or turf, or a combination of these, which makes them difficult to detect in excavation as they may be represented only by drip gullies, padstones, or stone surfaces. Roundhouses occur in many early Roman rural settlements in the region.

Variations can be detected in the rural landscape and its agricultural exploitation, for example in Worcestershire. In the river valleys in the south of the county, cropmarks reveal extensive landscapes of settlement enclosures, some of which have been shown to contain buildings with stone footings, paddocks, trackways and field systems. To the north of Worcester, along the River Severn, there are discreet enclosures of mid-Iron Age to late Roman date. Evidence for domestic occupation has been found in some of these, but not in others which may have been stock enclosures paired with the domestic enclosures. Such hypotheses could be tested through phosphate and micromorphological analyses. Away from the river valleys, there is a widespread scatter of small enclosed farmsteads – at Hanbury, associated with arable farming – while at Pendock there are extensive small settlements. Elsewhere in the county settlements are dispersed and appear to be pastoral-based sites.

Ancient countryside

Millets and isolated isolated farms

Strong tradition of open-field, beginning early and lasting for c.1200 years

Roads many, straight, on the surface

Many quays used for ports

Most hedges modern, of hedgerows straight

Pollard trees, if present, widely with habitats only in villages

Woods absent of even small large

Woodland area averaged 89% in 1086

Ancient woodland area now averages 3.8% of land area

Many place names including *fen*, *hwa*, *hwaite*, *-field* indicating former woodland

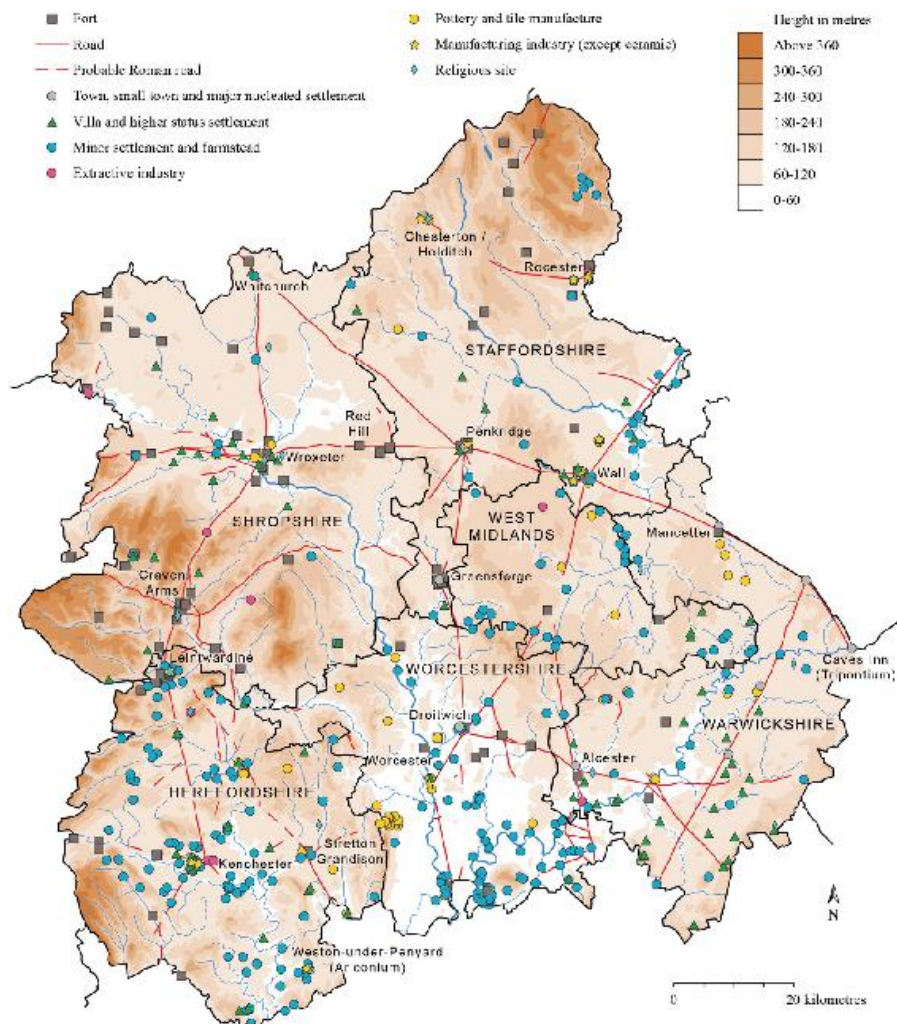


Figure 1.2 Regional map showing principal Roman sites and roads (Drawn by Lou



0 10 20 30 40 60 mm

Figure 1.3 Litharge cake from Pentrehyling Roman fort, Shropshire (after Allen *et al.* 2015, pl. 12; photograph: © Ancient Monuments Laboratory, Historic England)

Large-scale crop processing is indicated by assemblages of charred cereal crop waste on sites in the Vale of Evesham and Avon valley. By contrast, there is a lack of evidence for large-scale cereal processing on clay and gravel deposits on terrace margins north of the River Avon, where environmental evidence from Throckmorton and Wyre Piddle suggests that pastoralism was important (Griffin *et al.* 2005). At Wyre Piddle, cattle and horse are dominant, and the cattle are a larger breed than native cattle attested in the Iron Age, reflecting Continental imports. The proportion of cattle increases from the early to late Roman period: there is evidence for a cattle-dominated economy in some areas and movement of cattle to market in Worcester and other towns is likely, as has also been demonstrated in the landscape around Wroxeter (Gaffney and White 2007, 254–7). Strontium, oxygen and sulphur isotope analysis of cattle teeth and bone from late Roman contexts at Worcester show that none of the animals was born or raised in the vicinity of the town but came from different locations some distance to the north and west, including Herefordshire, south-west England, South Wales, the Lake District and the Malverns. At Droitwich, split wooden barrels may indicate the use

of brine or salt for food preservation, possibly related to local meat production. In West Midlands county, livestock management is inferred from enclosures and funnelling ditches around farmsteads spaced about a kilometre apart.

Evidence for manufacturing industries has been found in towns and in rural settlements. In Worcestershire, in addition to the well-known brine-processing industry at Droitwich, there is extensive evidence of large-scale iron smelting at Worcester and Weston-under-Penyard/Bromsash (Jackson 2012), alongside pottery manufacture in the Malvern area. The industries include copper and lead working and the manufacture of glassware and pottery at Worcester. Iron smelting is also found on some rural sites such as Clifton quarry on the River Severn. In Warwickshire there was specialist pottery production at Mancetter-Hartshill while in Staffordshire lead working took place at Wall and at the nearby farmstead or villa at Shenstone. Also in Staffordshire, an industrial quarter has been identified at Rocester, with shoes being manufactured at the nearby Tollgate Farm. Shropshire has a similar range of evidence, especially in the *civitas* capital at Wroxeter where additional industries include bone and shale working (Barker *et al.* 1997) while lead, iron and copper mining and working is also evidenced in the same county.

Both agricultural and industrial activity have implications for the broader landscape, including provision of grazing land; transport of raw materials and products, including the use of draught animals which would have required fodder; and provision of fuel including the maintenance of large areas of woodland, possibly coppiced for charcoal production, which would explain the occurrence of areas where there is a lack of evidence for settlement.

The distribution of products from the region's industries reflects cultural affinities and might highlight the functions of some sites. For example, the distribution of Severn Valley ware and the proportions of reduced and oxidised ware in assemblages define a broad ceramic zone (Evans, this volume). There is a sharp falloff in Severn Valley wares east of Alcester and north of Greensforge. The Malvern products included pre-formed oven material for portable ovens, which are rare in Britain as a whole but occur on sites where bread or other foods might have been supplied to larger numbers of people.

Change over time

In common with Roman Britain as a whole, we would not expect consistency and continuity in the region over the whole of the period. Although the dating of some sites is not as precise as we might wish, we can nonetheless make some general observations about the influence of Roman military activity, continuity of occupation of settlements from the late Iron Age, settlement establishment and abandonment, and changes in the pattern of settlement and land use.

Statistical analysis of coins found in the region and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme reveals a high frequency in the region of coins of the early period, biased by the number of sites of military origin at which coins have been found. Additional sites might be identified where quantities of early coinage are located (Deacon, this volume). In some parts of the region an influence of military activity on the development of the landscape can be detected, such as at Holditch where the settlement is related to the nearby fort at Chesterton, beginning in the middle of the first century and peaking in the early to middle second century before tailing off. Extensive excavation at Metchley in Birmingham revealed features that might be unexpected at a Roman fort, including enclosures with funnelled entrances for livestock management outside the fort, succeeding a short-lived vicus, and, following military abandonment in the early second century, iron-working together with the possible use of the former defences as a livestock enclosure. Several small towns in the region have military origins (White, this volume), and in Warwickshire and Birmingham the creation of roads by the military was followed by the development of new settlements, without Iron Age antecedents, alongside them.

In Herefordshire, occupation of some hillforts continues beyond the Conquest, but it is not known whether this is the case elsewhere in the region owing to a lack of data from hillforts in other counties. However, there are regional trends in the occupation of enclosed settlements other than hillforts. In Herefordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, late Iron Age enclosed settlements continue to be occupied into the Roman period but in all three counties many of these go out of use by the end of the second century AD, when new settlements are established, indicating a reordering of the landscape rather than abandonment. At Tucklesholme on the River Trent, late

first- to second-century enclosures were superseded by several phases of enclosure reorganisation in the mid-second century. In south Worcestershire there is a shift of settlement foci over time but continuity of boundaries and field systems. At Rocester and Whitemoor Haye in Staffordshire, field systems established in the Iron Age continued to be used throughout the Roman period, mainly for stock management.

There appears to be a peak in prosperity across the region as a whole from the mid-second to mid-third century. Romano-British material associated with flooding and bank erosion in the Arrow valley in Herefordshire shows a peak at about AD 200 which correlates with intensification of land division and possibly also increased arable cultivation (White 2003). The major period of activity at sites in West Midlands county seems to have been from the early to mid-second century into the early to mid-third century. The Ryknield Street cemetery at Wall was in use from the first to the fourth century but the major period of use, presumably corresponding to the floruit of the settlement, was the first half of the second century (McKinley 2008). Coins found in Worcestershire and reported to the PAS have a higher proportion than the national average dating to AD 138–61 and from AD 193 to the early third century, possibly reflecting peaks in economic activity. The peak of activity at the settlement at Weston-under-Penyard/Bromsash (*Ariconium*) was from the early second to mid third centuries but activity on the site extended from the Iron Age right through the Roman period until its end in the fourth century, although the focus of activity shifted over time. This pattern does not apply throughout the region: at Metchley, near Birmingham, there was regeneration of woodland in the late second or third century. In Shropshire, the few settlements that have been excavated demonstrate a variety of site histories but conform to the model of landscape change during or at the end of the third century. At Sharpstone Hill, for example, an enclosure was founded in the Iron Age and continued in occupation beyond the time of the Conquest until the mid to late third century. At Berwick Alkmund Park and Duncote Farms, settlements founded in the first century flourished in the second but are then abandoned or extensively remodelled after the middle of the third century. The development of rural settlement is reflected to some extent in the history of small towns: the second-

century public buildings (*mansio* and baths) at Wall were abandoned or destroyed during the third century (although the baths may have seen domestic occupation in the fourth century). Other settlements – Greensforge, Rocester, Penkridge – continued into at least the fourth century, as did the villas, in common with the rest of the country.

A particular characteristic of the third and fourth centuries in the region is the creation of new fortified enclosures (*burgi*) along roads, in addition to the modification of defences at settlements which had been fortified earlier, but throughout most of the region late Roman activity has proved difficult to detect. In Shropshire most settlements occupied in the second and third centuries are abandoned by the early fourth century and there is no apparent evidence for their relocation or replacement; similarly, in Worcestershire abandonment of settlements in the fourth century is not followed by resettlement. Palaeoenvironmental evidence indicates some woodland regeneration but also continued management of an agricultural landscape, therefore indicating movement rather than depopulation. However, people do not seem to have moved into the towns since this coincides with shrinkage of the settlements at Droitwich and Worcester. In West Midlands county sites continued to be occupied into the fourth century but the level of activity was much reduced. The principal site for understanding development in the county is Longdales Road. Here, an enclosed site alongside the Roman road was established in the late first century and flourished throughout the second and into the third century. In the later third century it was abandoned in this form and re-established away from the road, perhaps signifying a change in function and status. Similarly, there is little evidence of occupation later in date than the third century on sites investigated by fieldwalking in the Tame Valley in Staffordshire, suggesting that the late Roman settlements lie under present villages and by the fourth century the medieval settlement pattern had begun to emerge. Elsewhere, some continuity from Roman to later periods can be detected: the built-up area at Worcester contracted in the late Roman period but features of known or possible Roman origin persisted, including the defences, road alignments and churches, and the location of the villa at Acton Trussell under the medieval church hints at continuity there.

A 'Roman' West Midlands: two regions?

As discussed already, the existing evidence highlights the contrast between the more and less (in some cases very little) Romanised parts of the region. Rather than simply a gradation of Romanisation, there seem to be two regions in the West Midlands in the Roman period rather than one, defined geographically across and within the region.

The quantity of pottery found across the region as a whole may provide a measure of Romanisation and indicates a north–south divide, but most of Shropshire and Herefordshire, apart from Wroxeter and Kenchester and their immediate environs and a handful of villas, might be regarded as falling within the less-Romanised zone. It has been suggested that Herefordshire was neither Roman nor Romano-British but 'Iron Age' in character throughout the Roman period (Ray, this volume).

In Worcestershire, there is evidence for a more-Romanised arable economy in the Cotswold/Avon zone; rural buildings on stone footings in the Bredon Hill area are influenced by the Romanised rural settlement pattern of the Cotswolds. This pattern is not seen in the north of the county reinforcing the impression that here Roman cultural practice was less influential than in the south of the county. In Warwickshire, a similar pattern is visible. When using ceramic evidence to consider the social and economic status of settlements, a significance difference is apparent in the use of material culture between sites investigated on the M6 Toll in the north-west of the county, where there is a relative paucity of artefacts from quite substantial sites (Powell *et al.* 2008), and those in the Avon Valley to the south. In West Midlands county, there is a marked difference between the quantities of pottery at the sites in the south of the area and those in the north, and the only sites identified as potential villas are in the south.

Without being geographically deterministic, it is clear that anyone researching in the West Midlands region as here defined has to take into account these realities of spatial and cultural patterning, a fact that has real impact when considering the research priorities that need to be identified for each county.

Research priorities

The topics highlighted here apply to the whole of the region or substantial parts of it, and to sites which have a regional or even national significance. Some of them are relevant not just for the Roman period but for other periods of the region's past as well. Conversely, application of our knowledge of earlier and later periods could enhance our understanding of aspects of the Roman West Midlands.

Filling the gaps: the blank areas

Some parts of the region have seen little development and there has therefore been little development-based archaeological work. Other areas have simply not attracted much archaeological investigation, whether as part of development or not, in some cases possibly because of the 'vicious circle' effect of a low level of existing information, the absence of local groups active in fieldwork, or a lack of strong local authority curation through the planning process. In existing arable areas this could be addressed by extensive fieldwalking, potentially applying a sampling strategy, possibly followed by geophysics and evaluation trenching where apparent concentrations of material are located by surface collection. Such an approach could identify genuinely 'blank' areas which may have been used as pasture or managed as woodland. The work could be undertaken by academic institutions and local groups as part of a broader landscape study, similar to those undertaken at Hanbury in Worcestershire and Barston in West Midlands county. However, this is also exactly the sort of question that a major infrastructure project like HS2 could tackle, following on from the results of work along the M6 Toll, other roads and various pipelines, since linear transects across the region demonstrate exactly where the blank areas are.

The beginning and the end: Iron Age to Roman, and Roman to medieval

The beginning and the end of the Roman period are currently poorly understood throughout the region. As noted above, occupation of enclosed farmsteads has been shown to continue after the Conquest, but surprisingly little research has been undertaken into the region's hillforts, other than in the Marches. Were hillforts still occupied at the

time of the Conquest or, as in other parts of the country, had some of them been abandoned by then? Were they used during the Roman period, if not for domestic occupation, for military depots such as at Credenhill, or for 'shrines' as at Croft Ambrey? Were any of the region's hillforts (or their annexes or land immediately outside their defences) reoccupied in the late or early post-Roman periods? Defended enclosures straddling main roads, usually termed *burgi*, are characteristic of the late Roman period in the region but have seen relatively little investigation. Firmer dating evidence is required for the defences themselves, and more information is needed on what they enclosed and how intensively their interiors were occupied. Other than villas, few rural settlements seem to have been occupied much into the fourth century. The possibility that the latest Roman settlements lie under what became medieval farms, hamlets and villages offers a wonderful opportunity to bridge the Roman to medieval chronological divide and to increase our understanding of the early medieval as well as the Roman settlement pattern. This could be addressed by a reassessment of finds from excavations of medieval villages and farmsteads and by test-pitting of currently occupied areas, as has been undertaken at Sheinton in Shropshire (Hannaford 2005) and in other parts of the country.

Publication, synthesis, reassessment and predictive mapping

In addition to the completion of post-excavation analysis and publication of results of investigations on several individual sites (some of them undertaken a considerable time ago), syntheses and reassessments of individual sites, groups of sites by type or geographic area, and artefact classes, would substantially improve our understanding of the Roman West Midlands. For example, the large amount of archaeological work at Wall in Staffordshire has been piecemeal rather than large scale and needs to be brought together and reassessed, accompanied by a new analysis of pottery and other artefacts and possibly by a hinterland project like that undertaken at Wroxeter. The results of excavations at the nationally significant Mancetter/Hartshill pottery production area still await analysis and publication.

Other artefact studies include statistical analysis of coins and other artefacts recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which will need to be combined with other finds recorded in HERs, and an overall assessment of PAS finds from the region. Identification of specific artefact types may point to religious practices even when no distinctive structures can be identified, or to regional production of brooches, as with Polden Hill types for instance (Bolton 2016).

Where there is an adequate level of precision in dating and provenance of primary data, the power of GIS enables sophisticated analysis of distribution patterns. Similarly, the application of GIS contributes to predictive modelling using topographic data derived from LiDAR data, mapping alluvium which may overlies and therefore conceal sites and itself provides information on environment change, and identifying gravel islands in floodplains which may have attracted settlements. The National Mapping Programme of cropmarks visible on aerial photographs has so far included only some parts of the region and therefore needs to be extended, and in particular to include those areas in which cropmarks are less numerous and less clearly visible but nonetheless form a vital part of the archaeological record.

The routes along which agricultural produce and livestock, fuels, raw materials, and industrial products were carried through the region are imperfectly understood. Although the lines of some principal roads are known, only parts of the course of others have been recorded, and little is known of the structure of roads and construction methods employed on them. It is clear that roadside settlements of various sizes developed throughout the region and the identification of roads therefore assists in the identification of these settlements. Historic maps and records may assist identification of roads of Roman origin which remained in use in later periods, and work in Birmingham has shown that it is possible to locate Roman road routes even in modern urban areas. Late records may also assist in identifying the likely extent of navigable waterways in the Roman period and their crossing points, which indicate the location of roads.

Application of concepts more familiar from later periods may also assist in predicting the location of some sites. In Herefordshire, for example, attention has been drawn to the landscape setting of structures along the River Wye, where aesthetics seem to have been the main determinant.

The dead and the other world

It is very difficult to reach significant conclusions about demographics and the relationship of cemeteries to the settlements of the region since so little evidence exists. Very few burials of the period have been found, either cremations or inhumations. In some places soil conditions mean that bone survival is poor, but the grave goods and burial rituals associated with inhumation may still be informative. Investigation around known settlements may reveal more cemeteries and radiocarbon dating of some undated and unaccompanied inhumations may show that they are Roman. In addition, very few structures that can be identified as temples, shrines or sanctuaries are so far known in the region, although some altars have been found. Our knowledge of the spiritual life of the Roman West Midlands could be enhanced by a finds-based approach, identifying artefacts of religious or cultic function, and environmental evidence for plants used in religious practices. However, the recently published discovery of a roadside shrine and cremation burials north of Wroxeter in Shropshire during works relating to a water pipeline amply demonstrate the contribution that fully funded mitigation of such projects can make to the evidence base (Daniel and Reid 2017).

Palaeoenvironmental evidence and other scientific analyses

The retrieval and analysis of far more palaeoenvironmental evidence across all periods, not just Roman, is a major priority for the region. This evidence survives in excavated features and off-site organic and alluvial or colluvial deposits and consists of pollen, plant macrofossils and charcoal; insects including parasites associated with stock keeping; molluscs; and sedimentation. Off-site deposits need to be identified: most of the palaeoenvironmental evidence currently available is from fairly limited locations such as gravel terraces in Worcestershire, but deposits have also been found in what might be regarded as unpromising locations within the modern Birmingham conurbation. Combined with radiocarbon dating, which needs to be used at the assessment stage as well as part of detailed analysis, palaeoenvironmental data can show the relative importance of arable and pastoral agriculture at different times; the impact of agriculture

on woodland cover; woodland regeneration; and might even relate to religious activity, as suggested at Rocester. Increased alluviation or accumulation of colluvium may result from deforestation and intensification of cultivation, and the palaeoenvironmental evidence can be combined with the indirect evidence of pastoral regimes inferred from the character and forms of settlements and field patterns. Micromorphological analysis of 'dark earth' deposits, for example, shows that some parts of towns may have been cultivated or used to keep stock (McPhail, Galinié and Verhaeghe 2003). This is complemented by isotope analysis of cattle bone and teeth showing the source of cattle brought into towns.

Management of woodland as a renewable resource by coppicing could be detected through the identification of roundwood in charcoal or roundwood and distinctive coppice stools where actual wood survives in waterlogged deposits, or in the decreased pollen production of species commonly coppiced. Coppiced wood may have been burned for charcoal, as in later periods. The many charcoal-burning platforms identified in the region's historic woodlands have generally been considered to be of medieval or post-medieval date and to relate to documented charcoal production in those periods but radiocarbon dating might show that some of them are of Roman date.

In-situ physical evidence for exploitation of minerals by mining and quarrying may have been completely removed by later activity, covered by later built development over former extraction sites, or the whole deposit worked out. However, chemical analysis of iron slag and coal, as well as the geological study of building stone and lime used in mortar, may enable identification of their sources.

Before and after Rome: the longue durée

Simon Esmonde Cleary (2011) stated that although we need to recognise the special characteristics and political and economic structures of the centuries when the region was part of an Empire, we also need to see beyond the Roman period and beyond Romanists and recognise the *longue durée* of human history in the West Midlands. Appreciation of the characteristics of the region before the Roman period and those continuing up to very recent times, such as the Feldon/Arden division in Warwickshire and the prevalence of wood pasture (e.g. Hooke 2006, 61), contributes not only to our

interpretation of individual sites but also our understanding of broader patterns of settlement and economic activity. A few examples of this are activities such as charcoal production and related woodland management; long-established routes for cattle droving and the transport of salt; river navigation and crossing points; and the existence of rural market centres.

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Fortress, forts, and the impact of the Roman army in the West Midlands

Roger White

Ostorius, well aware that first events are those which produce alarm or confidence, by a rapid movement of his light cohorts, cut down all who opposed him, pursued those who fled, and lest they should rally, and so an unquiet and treacherous peace might allow no rest to the general and his troops, he prepared to disarm all whom he suspected, and to occupy with encampments the whole country to the Avon and Severn ... (Tacitus, Annals 12.31)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is not to outline the history of the occupation of the West Midlands by the Roman army as that would be unlikely to improve on existing understanding given the limited space available here; there are several good and up-to-date accounts to which one can refer for this broader chronological and strategic framework (Jones and Mattingley 1990, 64–105; Davies and Jones 2006, 47–54; Burnham and Davies 2010, 37–48). Rather, the purpose of this paper is twofold: first to offer an outline of the types of site encountered in the region and how well they are understood through archaeological work; and second to examine the evidence for the economic and social impact of the Roman army. This approach is intended to achieve the aim of identifying gaps in research which may then be addressed through a strategy for targeted work in the future.

The Roman military presence in the West Midlands region was initially a heavy one but it was not long-lasting, yet it had a profound

effect in shaping the region in its transition from rule by the independent Iron Age peoples that inhabited the region in the mid-first century AD to an integrated element of the Roman province that emerged two or three generations later. While the presence of the Roman army may have been relatively transient, there is absolutely no doubt that its economic and social impact on the region was immense and continuing study of these aspects is throwing a great deal of light onto the transformation of the region in the Roman period. There is also a suggestion that in the later Roman period some sites in the region may have played a role played by exerting influence in relation to defence and/or logistical supply. The evidence for the earlier phases is relatively abundant; for the later phases it is much more difficult to characterise or understand – yet in research terms it is no less vital to understand than the earlier stages.

The nature of the evidence

Exploration of Roman military sites in the West Midlands region is a relatively recent development. Thomas Kendrick, summarising the pre-Second World War knowledge of Roman Britain, is only able to state for our region that ‘a small earthwork at Greensforge (Staffs) is possibly a Claudian military post’, before going on to remark that the town of Wroxeter ‘was almost certainly preceded by a legionary fortress’ (1932, 216). In this he was at least accurate in his predictions: Greensforge is a Claudian site, and a fortress at Wroxeter has now been found. Knowledge of the presence of Roman military remains in the region was thus patchy in the extreme. Consultation of the VCH for Shropshire, for instance, notes no explicit remains of the Roman army, while those that were visible, the extant earthworks at Wall Town and Linley Hill, are discussed among the Iron Age and Medieval sites rather than being recognised as Roman (Haverfield and Taylor 1908; Wall and Downman 1908, 379–80). These considerations perhaps put into perspective the concentration on the discovery and investigation of the presence and movement of the Roman army across the region in the 1950s and ’60s led by the energetic efforts of Graham Webster. Regionally, the change was brought about by the work of three principal aerial archaeologists: J. K. St Joseph of the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography, Jim Pickering (Hartley 2016), and Arnold Baker ([Figure 2.1](#)). Their

discoveries were made possible by the post-war combination of cheap, surplus RAF aircraft equipped with high-specification cameras and fully qualified pilots to fly them (White and Gaffney 2013, 4–5). J. K. St Joseph in particular was assiduous in publishing his results quickly in annual round-ups in *Journal of Roman Studies*, *Antiquity* and county journals (e.g. St Joseph 1951; 1953, 1955). More importantly, a dedicated group of individuals within the region, including John Houghton, Stan Stanford and J. K. St Joseph himself, tested the newly discovered sites through trial trenching to try and establish dates for the forts observed from the air (e.g. Houghton 1979; St Joseph 1951; Stanford 1958). The key aim of such exercises was to recover dating evidence, especially coins and samian which, for the first century, are highly sensitive chronological indicators, and thereby to establish chronologies for the development of the forts observed. Graham Webster was instrumental in using these data to try and reconstruct the broad chronologies of the Conquest, the results often being structured through the known governorships of the first century (Webster 1960; 1981). While there is now some disquiet about the reliability of this approach (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 132), at the time the work was important in elucidating the often complex sequence of forts at key locations in the West Midlands where campaign and permanent forts cluster in strategic areas at Leintwardine, Wroxeter, Greensforge, Wall and Water Eaton (on these sites, see below). Importantly too, these excavations, small-scale though they were, generated collections of material culture which form potentially rich sources of data for re-examination, as has happened with the Red Hill archive (Evans, this volume).



Figure 2.1 Aerial photograph of Greensforge Fort A with Fort B visible behind it. Camps 1 and 2 lie between the two forts but are not visible in this photo. (Photograph by J. K. St Joseph, © Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs, Unit for Landscape Modelling; CUCAP YS-53, June 1959)

Table 2.1 Towns and settlements with underlying Roman military settlements in the West Midlands

<i>Settlement</i>	<i>Military proven</i>	<i>Military assumed</i>	<i>Not military</i>
Alcester	•		
Ariconium			•
Caves Inn	•		
Chesterton on Fosse			•
Droitwich	•		
High Cross	•		
Holditch			•
Kenchester		•	
Leintwardine		•	
Mancetter	•		
Meole Brace			•
Red Hill	•		
Rocester	•		
Wall	•		
Water Eaton	•		
Whitchurch	•		
Worcester		•	
Wroxeter	•		

As a result of this work, the range of sites directly associated with the Roman army in the West Midlands can now be characterised as a variety of camps and forts, along with the associated road system. The visual impact of these sites on the landscape is comparatively slight when contrasted, for example, with the later prehistoric hillforts or medieval castles of the western fringes of the region. Even where they do survive, as at Wall Town, Shropshire, the impact on the landscape is muted. That this is so is a comparatively recent development, as it has become clear during the excavation of some sites that they were visible in the landscape even into the twentieth century (Jones 2002,

10–12). They have fallen victim latterly to the huge growth in industrial landscapes of exploitation, associated urban sprawl and infrastructure that has characterised much of the West Midlands since the eighteenth century. Another major factor, of course, is that the sites themselves have initiated settlements that still survive today, as is the case for a number of towns in the region, and is suspected in others (Table 2.1). We are reliant, therefore, on excavation to inform us most closely about the nature of the sites. Clearly too, in those cases where later settlement overlies the Roman sites, whether that evidence is also Roman, as in the case of Wroxeter, or is later in date, as with Alcester, we are often dealing with quite small areas that are available for excavation and with archaeological levels that are often heavily truncated, making it difficult to understand fully what is being seen.



Figure 2.2 Aerial photograph of The Lunt showing the irregular outline and reconstructed buildings, including the circular gyrus (Photograph: R. White)

In considering the anticipated evidence that might be found of military sites, it is important to bear in mind that some will have made far more of a long-lasting impact on the landscape than others. The distinction is traditionally recognised in the terminology adopted in talking of Roman military sites. Forts and Fortresses respectively

denote fortifications of a semi-permanent nature, the former being suitable for auxiliary forces of up to 1000, while a fortress is an establishment big enough to hold a legion of around 5500 troops. The longevity of these sites generally means that they have some kind of associated settlement, commonly termed a *vicus* or *canabae*, the former referring to settlements outside forts and the latter outside a fortress (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 167–8). Also in this category, although much rarer in the region, are the so-called Fortlets. These can have held no more than a couple of *contubernia* or *turma* (20 men or 8–10 men and their mounts) and are often found in a sequence to form a line of rapid communication, as on the Gask Ridge frontier, for example (Hanson 1987, 153–7). The only known example in the region is the site on Linley Hill (Webster 1956), although there is another possible example on the Herefordshire – Worcestershire border at Tedstone Wafer but the evidence is not convincing (Webster 1954; Ray, this volume). The term Camp is used here to describe those sites that are thought to be temporary establishments, created either as practice camps or campaign bases for a mixed force which in size lies between that suitable for a Fort or Fortress – the latter have often been termed *vexillation fortresses* in the literature, although the term ‘campaign fort’ is now preferred (Frere and St Joseph 1983, 37–9; R. Jones 2011, 6–12). What distinguishes such sites (apart from their anomalous size) is that when excavated they produce virtually no structural evidence, other than the ditches defining them, or occasional ovens and pits. This reflects their use as a defended enclosure in which to pitch tents to house troops, leaving only slight traces that are easily eradicated (Jones and Mattingley 1990, 177). Morphologically, both forms of military site have the well-known playing card shape, an easily recognisable trait that has been invaluable in identifying military sites from the air (Frere and St Joseph 1983, 19–144; Baker 1992), although the number of ditches defining the shape is more variable.

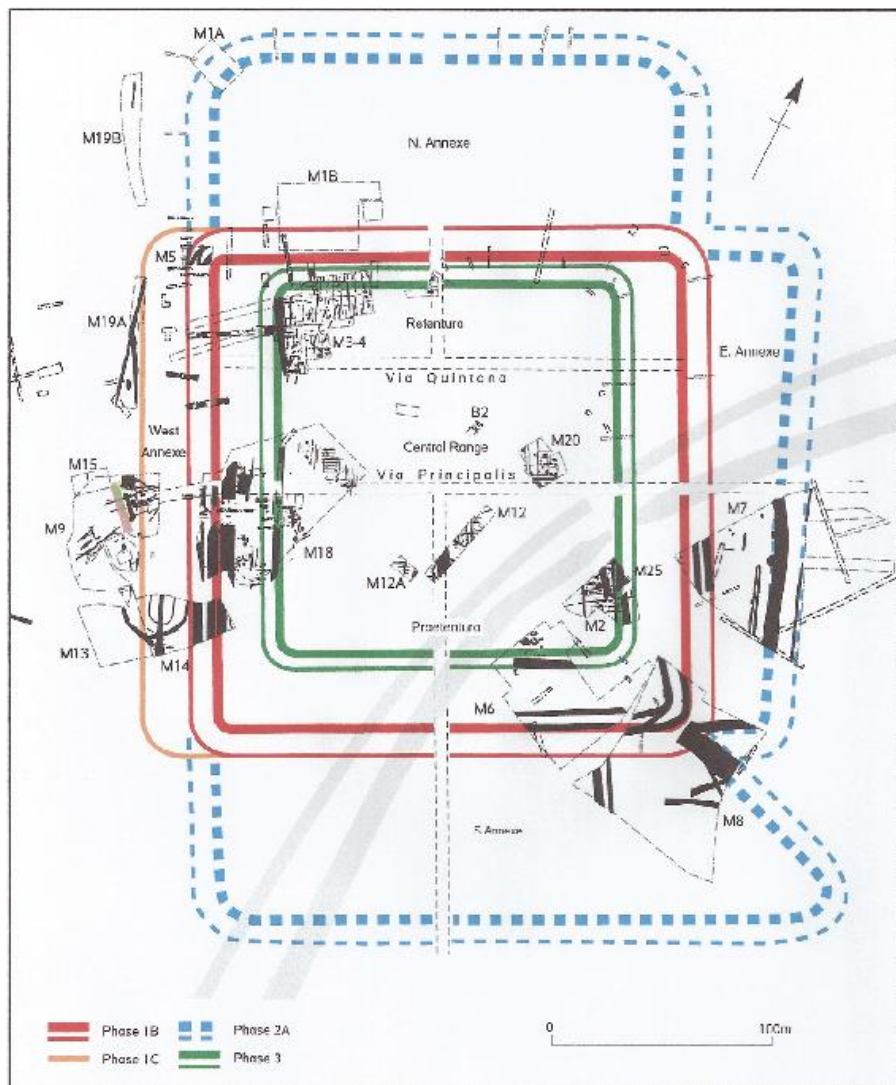


Figure 2.3 Phase plan of Metchley fort (after Jones (forthcoming), drawn by Nigel Dodds)

Despite this picture of uniformity, it is worth noting that there are anomalies which signal that Roman military practice was not always as rigid as we might expect, and that we should be alert to other possibilities. First is that at least two forts in the region – the Lunt at Baginton and Dodderhill, Droitwich – have irregular plans. That at the Lunt (Hobley 1969; 1973; 1975) is basically regular except for one of the long sides of the fort which skirts irregularly around what is thought to be a *gyrus* or horse-training facility (Figure 2.2), while Dodderhill has a sub-square plan dictated by local topography

(McAvoy 2006, 11–5). Second is that there are potentially examples of campaign forts within Iron Age forts, as has been suggested for both Brandon Camp and Credenhill (Brandon Camp: Frere 2010, 199–200; Ray this volume), a practice that has been observed elsewhere in Britain, notably in the south-west (Webster 1981, 58–60). Third is the common, and entirely pragmatic, practice of ‘nesting’ forts within each other, presumably as garrisons are reduced in size or a smaller garrison takes up the site of a former establishment occupied by a larger number of troops. The situation can be further complicated by the addition of annexes which are thought to have provided secure areas for storage and herding of animals: a good example of both phenomena can be found at Metchley (A. Jones 2011; 2012; [Figure 2.3](#)).

Evidence base

Roads

Connecting all sites, and undoubtedly largely established at the same time as the campaign camps, are the roads which form a network across the region ([Figure 2.4](#)). While many of these roads are only visible as their modern replacements, in some locations they survive as earthworks, as is the case spectacularly in Sutton Park, Birmingham (Hodder, this volume), or as hedgelines. Until recently, it had been thought that the road system was exclusively a Roman foundation but recent discoveries in Shropshire have demonstrated that some, at least, were Iron Age in date and were re-used by the Romans (Malim and Hayes 2011). There seems little doubt that the creation of the road system and the foundation of the network of forts and fortress were interlinked, as was the case throughout the Empire where a road system did not already exist. The rationale is that the roads facilitated the rapid movement of troops in times of crises, as is amply demonstrated in their use by Roman forces in the Boudiccan revolt of AD 60–1 (Mattingley 2006, 106–12). The road system continued to function as infrastructure once the province was stabilised under the system known as the *cursus publicus*, the communication system used by the state to convey messages across the Empire. An element of the operation of this system was an imposition on local communities to maintain a change of horses and facilities for those using the system

(Black 1995).

Camps

Chronologically the earliest impact of the Roman army in the West Midlands is the evidence for the Conquest. In considering this period and the evidence it might produce, two factors need to be borne in mind. The first is that it is clear that the West Midlands was, for the Roman army, an area of transition, to be moved through relatively swiftly in their push both to crush the resistance led by Caratacus in the Welsh Massif and to occupy Britain up to the Mersey – Humber frontier with the *Brigantes* who, it is attested, were a client kingdom (Mattingley 2006, 83). The second point is that the attitude of the local rulers of the tribes will have been critical in determining the Roman response to them. Where there was acquiescence, as seems to have been largely the case in the West Midlands following the disarmament of the tribes by Scapula (*see* quote at beginning of chapter), the Roman touch could be correspondingly light; where there was resistance the response was deliberately brutal. Into this mix of realpolitik applied through arms comes a measure of geographical determinism. In crossing the largely lowland area of south and east Britain, the commanders of the invading force will have been well aware of the changing nature of the terrain in the West Midlands: the south and east of the West Midlands region is an extension of the lowlands while the north and west marks the gradual transition to the upland areas that dominate much of what is now Wales but which was then under the control of a number of tribes. The transition is echoed and defined to a degree by a Roman road, laid out by the army, now called the Fosse Way. This has, in the past, been seen as a real frontier but such an interpretation must be wrong in at least three fundamental respects. The first is that the Romans had no developed sense of frontiers in the mid-first century: this was a later evolution. The Imperial creed at this time was succinctly summed up by Virgil (*Aeneid* I:279): *imperium sine fine* – dominion without limit. Second, the Romans knew of the existence of extensive mineral resources, including precious metal deposits, in the Highland zone beyond the Fosse Way and moved to exploit them at the earliest opportunity, as is demonstrated by lead pigs found in the Mendips and dated as early as AD 49 (Frere *et al.* 1990, 38–40: 2404.1 and 2404.2). Third,

archaeology does not support the idea of a frontier since early sites do not always lie on its line – they often lie beyond it – showing that the Fosse Way is, at most, a line of first advance, designed to allow a brief regrouping before the push into more difficult terrain beyond (Jones and Mattingley 1990, 93–4 and map 4:26).



Figure 2.4 The Roman road from Wroxeter to Gloucester and Usk at Church Stretton, Shropshire (Photograph by J. K. St Joseph, © Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs, Unit for Landscape Modelling; CUCAP Y-84, July 1947)

This regrouping is reflected in the archaeological evidence seen in the region for the Roman army. Firstly, in the south and east there are clearly fewer military sites than can be seen in the north and west, as is confirmed by the map (Figure 2.5). Secondly, it is in the west that clusters of sites can be seen around key strategic points in the landscape where the commanders have grouped forces before advancing or where they have consolidated existing strongpoints in subsequent campaigns; this is especially clear on the western fringes of the West Midlands region (Burnham and Davies 2010, figure 1.8). It can be seen in a more linear fashion in the sequence of marching

camps along the line of Watling Street from High Cross, to Mancetter, to Wall, then to Kinvaston at Water Eaton and finally taking a clear line of advance westwards, to the north of the Wrekin, to Wroxeter, ending at the extensive series of camps there, just to the north of the later fortress (Welfare and Swan 1995, 175–80, 150–1; 158–61). To the south, at Greensforge, a series of campaign forts is also attested by aerial photography; excavation has dated these to the Claudio-Neronian period (Welfare and Swan 1995, 170–3). The Greensforge camps similarly appear to mark a line of advance north-westwards, to the south of the Wrekin, which is echoed in the campaign forts seen on either bank of the Severn at Leighton and Cound Hall in Shropshire (White 2010, 250–1; Welfare and Swan 1995, 158; Davies and Jones 2006, 148–9). These two lines of advance might be interpreted as a classic pincer movement, designed to overwhelm the *Cornovii* and force their acquiescence. The burning of the Wrekin hillfort attested in excavation may be associated with this cowing of the tribe, although the dating has been questioned (Stanford 1984; Andy Wigley, pers. comm.). Greensforge also formed the springboard for a western advance to the complexes at Stretford Bridge (Welfare and Swan 1995, 162), Brampton Bryan, Buckton Park and Walford, around Leintwardine (Welfare and Swan 1995, 61–6; [Figure 2.6](#)) and, further south, the forts at Clifford and Clyro on the Wye (Davies and Jones 2006, 135–41; Brewer 2010, 237–9). These forts controlled the valley routes into the foothills of the Welsh massif, as well as the routes to the legionary fortresses at Gloucester and Usk. Similarly, the camps around Wroxeter may, in addition, have initiated lines of advance to the north and north-west, notably evidenced by camps at Whittington and especially Rhyn Park (Welfare and Swan 1995, 166–8; Silvester 2010, 280–1). It is also possible, however, that some are evidence for the mustering of forces before Agricola's advance to the north of Britain (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 201): that both interpretations are equally likely only demonstrates how difficult it is to be certain of the date and purpose of such structures.

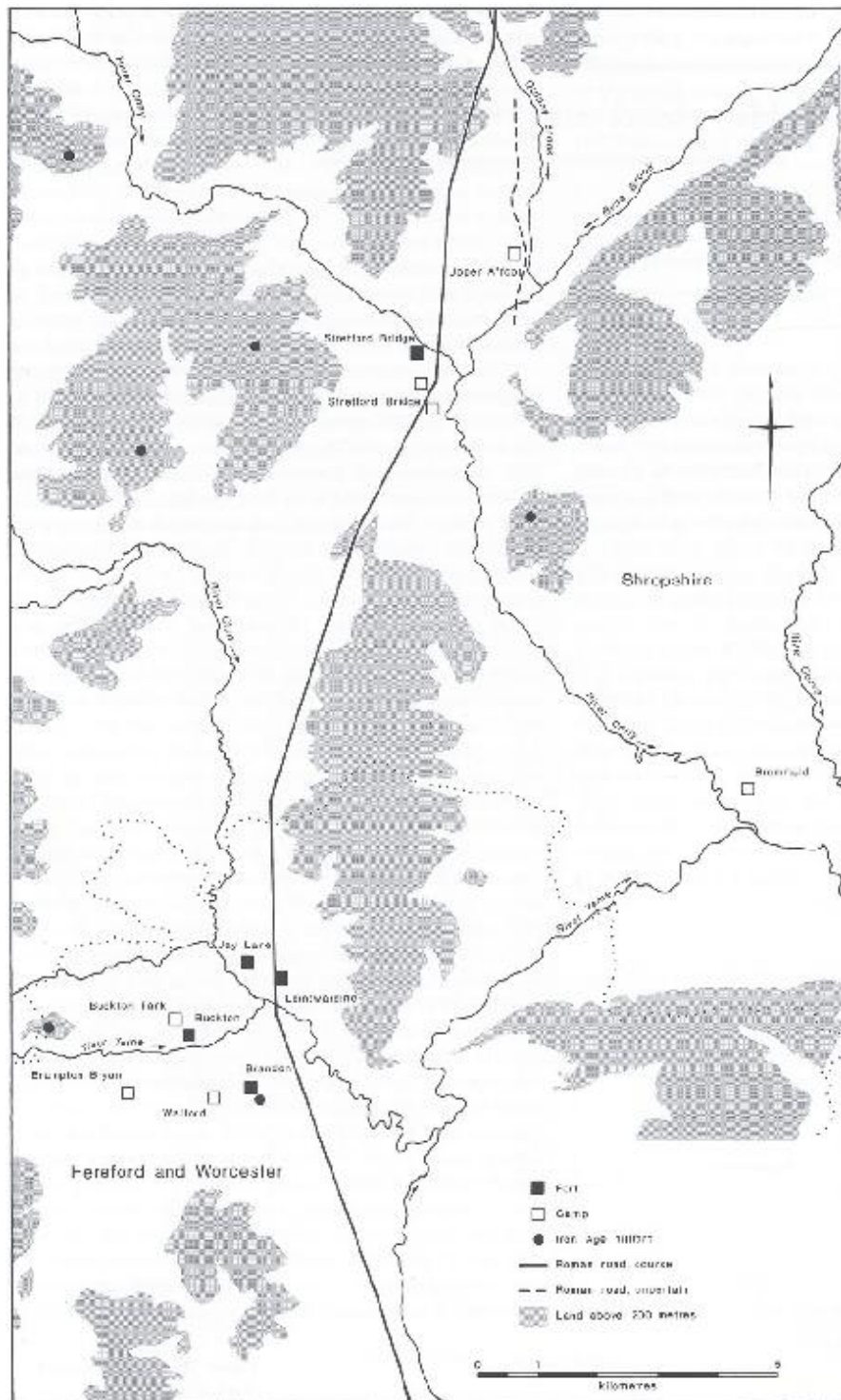


Figure 2.6 Map of forts and camps in Shropshire / Herefordshire (after Welfare and Swan 1995, fig. 51)

One other class of site may be associated with this phase: the suggested evidence for siege fortifications and works associated with the siege of Llanymynech Hill in the last stages of the campaign against Caratacus which were identified and excavated by the late Barrie Jones. While the identification of military sites in the vicinity of Llanymynech Hill, one of the largest hillforts by area in the Welsh Marches, might offer a plausible location for this battle, doubt has been cast upon the evidence and the case is by no means proven (Mattingley and Jones 1990; Davies and Jones 2006, 156–8).

Fortress

Only one fortress is located in the region, that at Wroxeter. Its history is tolerably well understood but only small areas have been excavated – by Graham Webster during his campaign of excavations on the baths complex between 1955 and 1985. Although it had long been suspected that there was a fortress beneath the Roman town, its precise location was only identified in 1975 when an unusually dry summer allowed detection by Arnold Baker of its northern side as a crop mark. At the same time, re-excavation by Stephen Johnson of a Kathleen Kenyon trench on the east rampart of the town demonstrated it was located immediately above the rampart of the fortress (Johnson and Ellis 2006), while excavations beneath the *macellum* associated with the baths located the front of the timber-laced rampart of the west side (Webster 2002, 21–2). Confirmation of the rear face of the rampart came in the following year. With three sides located it was realised that the south side lay beneath the modern road running into the village of Wroxeter, and this allowed the fixing of the approximate area of the fortress as 16ha (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 160–3; [Figure 2.7](#)).

Of the internal buildings of the fortress, little is known. Webster excavated the largest sample, comprising barrack blocks of the first cohort, a store building and rampart buildings (2002, 31–44). Johnson located characteristic beam slots of another building in the north-east corner of the fortress but could not recover a full plan of it (Johnson and Ellis 2006, 18–19). A granary is faintly visible in the middle of the north side of the fortress in 1976 vertical air photos, and the same photos also show parch marks indicating the position of stone-founded rampart buildings on the east and south sides (Frere and St Joseph

1983, fig. 98). Two rectangular courtyard buildings in *insulae* II and XII also appear to belong to the fortress, by analogy with similar buildings seen in the fortress at Inchtuthil in comparable positions (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 165).

Webster interpreted the sequence of buildings and their modifications as evidence for three phases: establishment of the fortress by Legio XIII in around AD 57 followed by a refurbishment about a decade later, occasioned by the re-garrisoning of the fortress by Legio XX, and a third, less-intensive phase in which he envisioned the fortress being used as a ‘depot’ as a result of the legion’s relocation first to the north of Britain with Agricola until AD 86, and then to Chester before AD 90 (Webster 2002, 80–4). While historically plausible, we should remember that only a tiny area of the fortress has been excavated and the phasing does not necessarily relate to known historical events or reconstructions of the movements of individual legions – something that we need to bear in mind when writing more generally about military sites in the region. Linking our extant sources to the archaeology in this way is always likely to be problematic, or just unprovable.

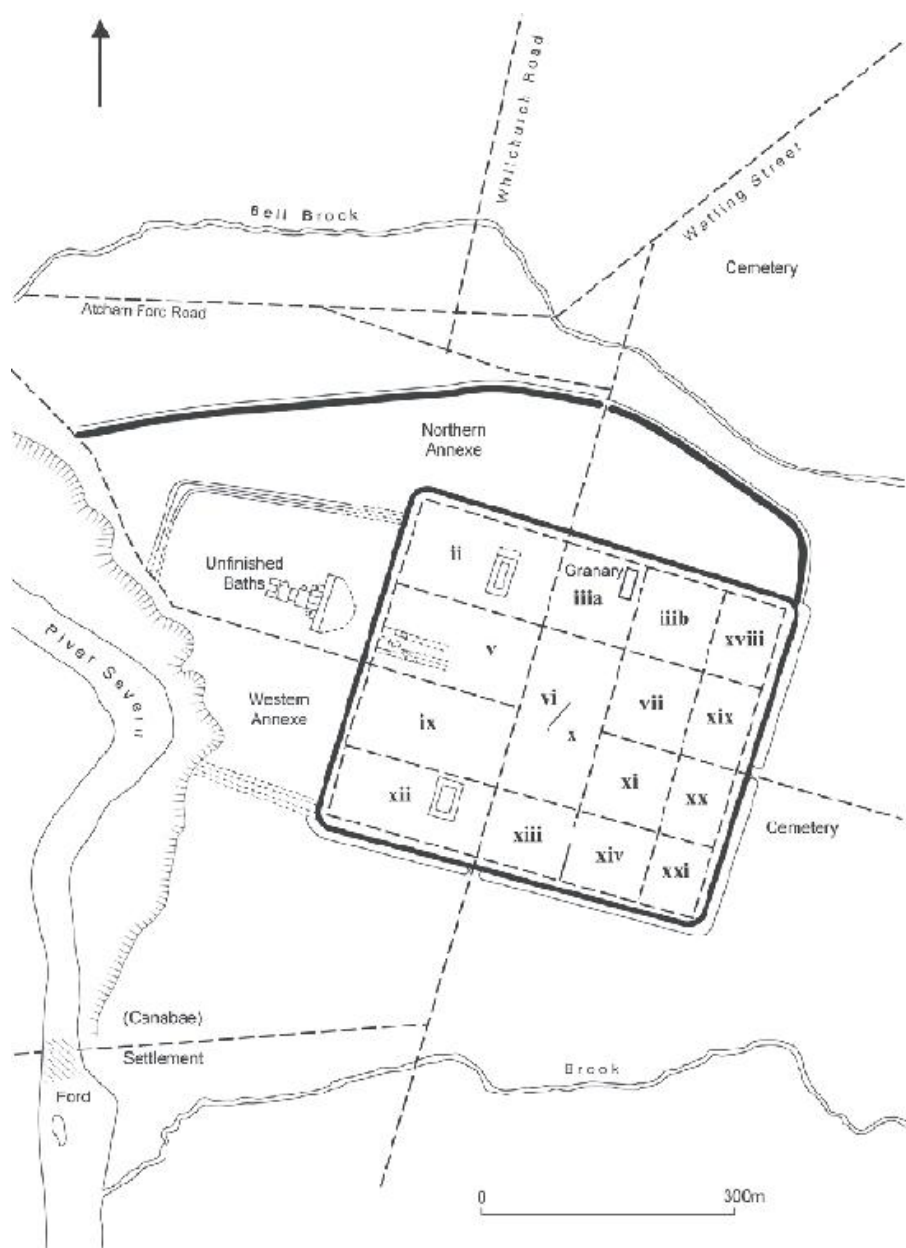


Figure 2.7 Plan of Wroxeter fortress (after White et al. 2013, fig. 4.3; drawn by Nigel Dodds)

Analysis of the aerial photographs together with the town plan of Wroxeter makes it clear that there are other elements that can be associated with the fortress. These include a rampart constructed along the south side of the Bell Brook valley, to create a northern annexe of the fortress, and a double-ditched rampart that extends

from the south-west corner of the fortress to the River Severn which created a western annexe. This latter feature, however, has no corresponding southern side but does contain a large, unfinished stone-built bath house which appears to have been constructed after the abandonment of the fortress. It has recently been argued that the northern annexe was a means of defending the fortress area while it was being constructed, the western annexe being a later feature defending the nascent *canabae* of the fortress, its associated civilian settlement, which would thus have occupied the area between the fortress and the river cliff. This settlement seems to have extended as far south as the modern village of Wroxeter (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 166–70).

Forts

By far the most numerous category of military sites in the region, forts are represented in every county in the study area, but only a handful has been thoroughly investigated. In terms of distribution, there is a preponderance of sites in the north and west of the region, reflecting the Romans' historically attested strategic interest in the subjugation of what is now Wales, a factor that is even more clearly reflected in the location of the Camps, as discussed above (Jones and Mattingley 1990, 79). There is also an important sequence of forts regularly spaced along the line of Watling Street which connects London with Wroxeter. This reminds us that roads too were part of the strategic consideration of the Roman army and government – they were vital communication routes that were essential to maintain the province.

Despite the relatively large number of forts in the West Midlands area, in seeking to offer some archaeological understanding of their function, date and evolution, we are only able to draw on a limited number of sites. The most comprehensively excavated forts in the region comprise Baginton (The Lunt) in Warwickshire, Metchley in West Midlands, Wall and Rocester in Staffordshire, and Pentrehyling in Shropshire, although many others have been investigated to a lesser extent. The results from these sites are considered below since they illustrate the strong diversity of the evidence, proof that while forts look to be standardised, they all have unique histories. In seeking to characterise forts further it is worth noting that, while it is known that a number of forts underlie current towns and settlements in the region

(an example being Whitchurch in Shropshire), we often know so little of the settlement histories of towns that we do not know whether evidence of Roman ancestry points to military activity or not ([Table 2.1](#)). The debate about Worcester's military character is a case in point: defences and military metalwork have been found, but there is no conclusive structural proof yet (Dalwood *et al.*, this volume).

The Lunt represents the most completely excavated fort in the region, but it is an anomalous example despite some broad developments that are also seen on other sites. Brian Hobley's excavations revealed three phases relating to the first occupation of the fort (Hobley 1969; 1973; 1975), which is perhaps the most common trait seen in the forts – they are rarely single phase. The first, dating to around the time of the Boudiccan revolt, was incompletely uncovered and its full extent was never determined. It was replaced by a smaller fort that incorporated some existing fort buildings, including a circular timber-walled structure thought to be a *gyrus*, or horse-training arena. The unique inclusion of this feature within the fort forced the defences themselves to be built around it and caused anomalies in the layout of other buildings. It seems hard to avoid the conclusion that this was a fort converted to fulfil a specialist function, seemingly, of horse training. The third phase comprised the demolition of the fort, as evidenced by occupation within the now disused *gyrus* and the infilling of the ditches of the fort (Hobley 1975, 2–3). A second period of occupation, in the later third century, is discussed below.

Excavations at Metchley have been extensive, but understanding of the site has been considerably hampered by the damaging truncation caused first by canal and railway construction and then the extension of the University Hospital. Excavations were conducted in the 1930s and 1960s, the latter being quite extensive but not adequately resourced. A series of three forts was identified, a sequence confirmed by excavations in the 1990s and early 2000s when the site was further redeveloped. The first fort, dated to the Claudio-Neronian period, produced evidence for barrack blocks, storehouses and granaries within a double-ditched regular fort enclosure. The second phase added annexes to the north, east and south sides to increase the area of the fort: the *vicus* to the west was modified by creating timber funnels for channelling livestock into the fort's interior. A third phase,

dated late in the first century, comprised a retrenchment of the installation by constructing a small fort within the footprint of the first fort. The fort was abandoned in the early second century but continued in use seemingly as a civilian site until it was finally abandoned in around AD 200 (A. Jones 2002; 2005; 2011; 2012).

There was evidence too for multiple Roman forts at Rocester, once again superimposed on each other as at Metchley. The first fort appears to have been founded in the 60s AD and has produced evidence of its double-ditch defences only. The second fort, which seems to date from AD 140–60 and was in occupation until around AD 200, produced evidence for a barrack block, officers' quarters and roads. Another phase of fortification, dating to the third and fourth centuries, is thought to be associated with the extensive civilian settlement that developed around the forts and which survived their demise (Ellis, Halsted and Burrows, forthcoming). A similar, and more comprehensively examined, sequence was found at Wall but here the three (or possibly four) forts and later civilian settlement did not coincide. The forts were located on a sandstone plateau overlooking the line of Watling Street, commanding the landscape. The earliest fort appears to be Claudian in date and military activity seems to extend into the second century (Round 1969–70; Round 1981–82; Burnham and Wachter 1990, 274–8; McKinley 2008, 87–8). The civilian settlement, below the plateau, is tied closely to the line of Watling Street. This, and other sites along Watling Street, had late Roman fortifications known as *burgi* on them. These will be discussed further below.

The fort at Pentrehyling, on the Shropshire / Montgomeryshire border, was excavated extensively and has produced evidence of barrack blocks within a conventional set of fortress defences (Figure 2.8). It appears to be a short-lived establishment limited to the first century but with a civilian settlement that may have extended into the early second century. Artefactual evidence was found for fourth-century activity but the character of this was not clear. The site produced extensive evidence for industrial activity related to lead smelting and silver extraction alongside iron-working (Allen *et al.* 2015). The nearby fortlet at Linley, located at the top of Linley Hill, may also have been associated with lead-mining activity as it overlooks what it thought to be a lead-processing site in the grounds

of Linley Hall (Webster 1981, 84). It remains the only proven fortlet found in the region.

This cursory examination of these few relatively well-explored sites offers little in the way of coherence or consistency. What we can see is that there is evidence of first-century foundation for most of them. Occupation at Pentrehyling in the western half of the region did not to extend much into the second century, if at all, whereas the remainder, which lie more on the east side, tend to survive longer and seem to be more likely to progress to become civilian settlements. As so few forts have been comprehensively excavated on the western side of the region, the significance of this observation is difficult to test. Once a site has been identified as being suitable for a fort, it is often re-occupied using elements of earlier defences where possible. This will have had the dual benefit of adding extra lines of defence if retrenching, while forming a ready-made annexe to the fort under the control of the army. Similar traits can be seen in the camps as well. Also evident is the link between forts and economic exploitation. Again, this is clearest at Pentrehyling where there is proof of silver extraction, a state-controlled monopoly. It is also demonstrated at Dodderhill, Droitwich where a case has been made that a second phase of use, from c. AD 120–50, represented state interest in salt production (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 214). Similar evidence can be seen in at least two of the Cheshire *wiches* – Middlewich and Northwich – both of which had Roman forts. The third *wich* – Nantwich – does not seem to have had a fort, but its salt production has been very firmly linked to the needs of the military economy, not least in the tanning of leather and the salting of meat for preservation (Arrowsmith and Power 2012, 179–80; Maltby 2016, 793). The abandonment of Pentrehyling after such a short occupation may be linked to the exhaustion of silver production and the leasing of lead exploitation to concessionaries, the focus of Roman military interest instead devolving to Forden Gaer only 10 miles (16 km) to the north, a site more securely tied in to the Roman road network as well as to an adjacent ford across the River Severn. Settlement at Forden Gaer appears to follow a pattern much more akin to the longer-lived activity seen on the other forts discussed here (N. Jones 2010, 243–5).

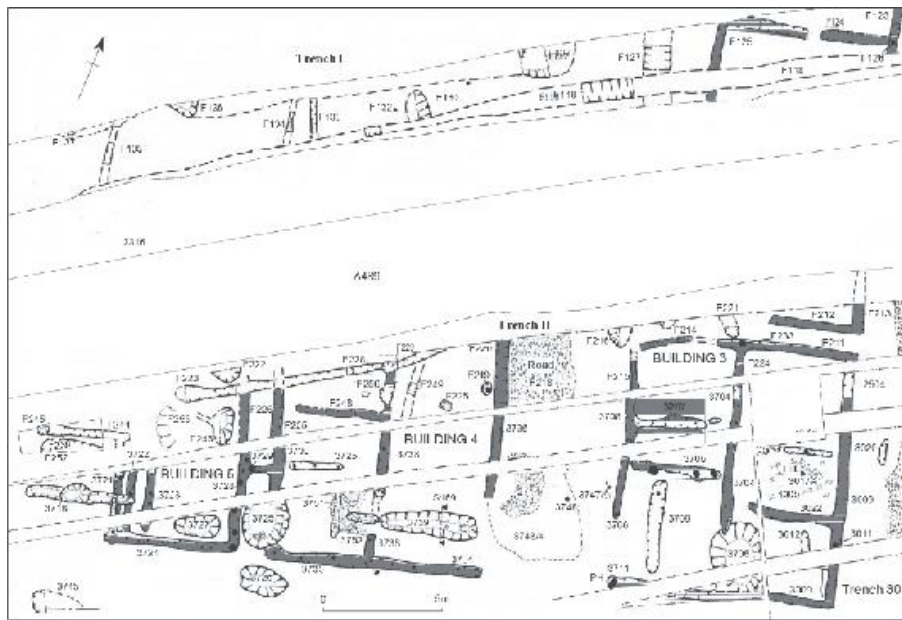


Figure 2.8 Plan of excavated barrack blocks, Pentrehyling, Shropshire (after Allen et al. 2015, fig. 20; drawn by Mark Breedon)

Another aspect of the military's impact on the region – its environmental impact – is less well evidenced, partly because of a relative shortage of samples compared to the south and east of Britain. This means that it is difficult to be certain whether identified trends are real or are a factor of low sampling levels (van der Veen 2016, 807–8, 823–7). We have noted already the use of salt in food processing, a resource that was particularly rich in the West Midlands and comparatively easy to produce, in contrast to coastal salterns as brine from rock salt has a much higher concentration of salt and thus needs less evaporation (Arrowsmith and Power 2012). In terms of diet and animal husbandry, there is some evidence for growth in the physical size of domestic animals, notably cattle, in the region but there is less certainty as to whether this is because new blood lines or breeds were introduced or was the result of better feeding regimes for the animals (Maltby 2016). Isotope analysis of well-stratified groups of animal bones may go some way to answering these questions. Similarly, the introduction of new species of food plants (van der Veen 2008) and of improved methods of agriculture, leading to higher levels of production (van der Veen 2016), suggest that Roman agricultural practices had a significant impact on agricultural

surpluses. That some of this is attributable to the army is perhaps indicated by the evidence of Roman land measurements used to lay out small allotment-sized fields at Duncote Farm, north of Wroxeter (Jones 1994). It is suggested that this activity might have been undertaken by a veteran to produce cash crops, since the desire to raise and sell cash crops is an approach unlikely to be attempted by native farmers unfamiliar both with the kinds of crops introduced by the Romans and the monetary economy that those in the Army were used to. Similar considerations underpin evidence for a substantial increase in beer production evidenced by more industrial approaches to grain processing and malting (van der Veen 2016, 811–3). This could be interpreted as increasing production in response to rapid growth in demand, and thus the possibility of quick profits. A less welcome aspect of increased trade, including the importation of grain to feed the army during the invasion period, was the probable introduction of the grain weevil to Britain. The insect is first attested at Alchester, in Oxfordshire, just outside our region. More welcome in the same deposits were new plant species in the form of coriander, celery and millet (Smith and Kenward 2011; Booth *et al.* 2007, 24, 281). In terms of new species, it is not easy to suggest which of the 50 or so new edible species were specifically introduced by the army, but some (notably black pepper, pomegranate, peach, sesame, lettuce and black cumin) are found only in London or on military sites while others, such as fig, grape (both evidenced at Metchley in Birmingham), mulberry and lentils, decline after the early Roman period suggesting a link with military imports and diet (van der Veen 2016, 819–21).

Military sites from the second to third century

As has been clearly demonstrated in coin analysis of the Roman army's deployment in Wales (Davies 1980), there was an intensive phase of military occupation extending from the Flavian period in the 70s AD through to the early Hadrianic period when such a dense network of sites was maintained that a paper garrison force of 35,000 men would have been needed to maintain it. As has also been pointed out, however, a paper force is probably what it was: it is highly unlikely that such numbers were ever required to hold down what was a sparsely populated region, outside of lowland coastal areas

(Burnham and Davies 2010, 48–53; Mattingley 2006, 153). The same is true of the Marches. Following the Hadrianic redeployment of forces to the north, it seems that very few forts remained occupied by the army in the West Midlands region, Rocester being one such site. The subsequent fate of the site of the forts depended a great deal on whether they lay on or off the main road system (Table 2.2). Those that were strongly integrated within the road network, as with those on Watling Street or on roads leading to the two fortresses at Chester and Caerleon, by and large became civilian settlements, perhaps encouraged by the *cursus publicus* system that demanded a network of *mansiones* where those using the system could rest and change their horses (Black 1995). The most obvious example of this is Wall (Burnham and Wacher 1990, 274–8). Exceptions, like Chesterton, Staffordshire were replaced by nearby settlements more closely integrated into the road system – in this case Holditch which was less than a mile from Chesterton (Burnham and Wacher 1990, 217–22).

Table 2.2 Forts and camps that failed to develop into towns or settlements mapped against the road network

<i>Fort</i>	<i>On road network</i>	<i>Off road network</i>
Baginton		•
Bromfield	•	
Chesterton (Staffs)	•	
Clifford	•	
Greensforge	•	
Metchley	•	
Pentrehyling		•
Rhyn Park		•
Stretford Bridge	•	
Stretton Grandison	•	
Wall Town		•
Walton		•
Whittington		•

In some instances, the sites of former forts demonstrate evidence for later activity, although whether for civilian or military purposes is not clear. At The Lunt, Baginton, for example, the area of the fort was re-defined by the excavation of a new ditch with an inturned entrance on the short, southern side. This was defended by a narrow six-post gate. Dating evidence suggested occupation in the late third or perhaps early fourth century (Hobley 1975, 4–6). No internal features were recognised. Similarly, at Pentrehyling the fort ditch was again re-defined although no activity within the fort was detected. Dating was in this instance provided by a coin of the AD 340s and an inscribed silver spoon (Johns 2015). Lastly, the final (undated) phase at Metchley indicates that, once again, the area of the fort was re-defined and turned over, perhaps to the herding and impounding of cattle in the later Roman period, although this activity could equally have been post-Roman. This ephemeral evidence, indicative of an interest in the site of former forts, suggests the activity of the state. If so then it may be part of a wider pattern related to the collection of tax in kind, and

the holding or storage of the produce generated, by state officials. Similar evidence can be attested in the so-called *burgi* along Watling Street (Gould 1999).

Although most forts ceased to be occupied in a formal sense by troops, there is little doubt that soldiers will have been seen in towns and settlements in the region. At Droitwich, for instance, official monitoring of salt production is likely throughout the period and there will have been the need periodically to supervise collection of taxes, for example. A discharge certificate (Diploma) from Wroxeter reminds us that there will have been veterans too, especially at Wroxeter where they will have provided an element of the population (Atkinson 1942, 185–93; Frere *et al.* 1990, 19–21: 2401.8). As already noted, their presence is suggested at Duncote Farm, close to the city. Even if it is difficult to prove that this was a veteran's farm, such considerations remind us that the impact of the Roman army on the region was expressed in more ways than the construction and occupation of forts. As has been argued in the overview volume, the longer-term impact of the Conquest on the region is likely to have been the demands on the local economy to supply the army with the agricultural surplus it needed to function. Of these, cattle and their by-products of meat and leather are likely to have been the most important (Esmonde Cleary 2011).

Late Roman authority and control in the West Midlands

In dealing with Roman Britain in the later Empire, it is more important than ever to link back into the wider operation and governance of the state. For this region, the point has been made extensively elsewhere of the impact of the re-organisation of the provincial structure of Britain into four provinces, and the parallel separation of state and military that is a feature of the Diocletianic Empire-wide re-structuring (White 2007, 49–72). A consistent feature of this re-organisation is that both the army and civil service were seen as servants of the state, a role that was established and signalled by the wearing of specific items which made their role explicit to the population. For men these items included a tunic and trousers worn in accompaniment with the military belt (*cingulum militare*), and specific

brooch types, notably the crossbow brooch which pinned a military cloak, the *sagum* (Swift 2010, 139–48, 159–85). It is also apparent that the state's control of the money supply in the late Empire had one main role: to ensure the payment of its servants, whether in the army or in the civil service (since the two amounted to much the same thing; Esmonde Cleary 1989, 11). It follows that in seeking out the late Roman military presence in the later Empire one is not necessarily looking just for architectural / archaeological evidence but rather one must primarily find evidence for particular cultural material: military-style dress accessories and weapons, alongside late coinage.

The archaeological and architectural aspect of the evidence for the late Roman army is limited to the evidence for the massive fortifications that were a characteristic of the later Empire (Johnson 1983). In the West Midlands region, the only examples that fulfil these criteria are the fortifications found along Watling Street – the so-called *burgi* – and the stone and earthwork defences of some of the more important towns. The *burgi* are five small (2 ha) forts defended by multiple ditches fronting a stone wall and internal rampart located astride Watling Street at Red Hill, Water Eaton, Wall, Mancetter, and Caves Inn (*Tripontium*). Nothing is known of their internal arrangements. Of these, that at Wall is the most comprehensively excavated but the dating is equivocal and the most recent assessment is dis-inclined to assign a military function to any of them (Gould 1999). Certainly, the term *burgus* should be avoided since, as has been pointed out, they are in no way comparable to continental examples of heavily defended bridgehead sites that are usually called *burgus*. The closest British parallel is probably that at *Cunetio* (Mildenhall, Wiltshire; Corney 1997) although this is a much larger and more impressively fortified site. *Cunetio* has been interpreted as a centre for storing the *annona*, a function that could be applied to these Watling Street sites. *Annona*, the harvesting of tax-in-kind, takes on much greater significance in the later Empire and the logic in ascribing these sites to that purpose is that it will have compelled the use and maintenance of a network of delivery, storage and distribution. Since the resources had value, both to the state as a means of payment and intrinsically, they needed to be stored securely. If these sites were indeed secure storage sites for the *annona*, it needs to be explained why they are only found on this section of Watling Street, why they

are so closely spaced, and why they are not paralleled in other parts of the Diocese of Britannia. Until further evidence is forthcoming, the role of these sites must remain unclear. In favour of the interpretation is the fact that these sites sit astride Watling Street, the principal and most direct route between the Diocesan capital at London and the probable seat of a military command based in Chester, putatively identified with the *comes tractus maritimus [per Britannias]* mentioned by the historian Amminianus Marcellinus (White 2007, 58–9; 2017). While we cannot prove that such a command existed, we can assume that there will have been a senior command structure in charge of the West Midlands region, and certainly Chester has the archaeological evidence to demonstrate that it would have been an appropriate location for a senior command (White 2007, 61–4).

Assuming that such a command did exist, where were the forces stationed in the West Midlands region? Clearly, for any army command covering the West Midlands area in the late Roman Empire, the military threat must have been perceived to be very low. Unlike the continent, armed incursions by external hostile forces was a remote possibility and when they did occur, as with the ‘Barbarian Conspiracy’ of AD 367, the impact was probably felt most strongly by the coastal communities rather than inland. Certainly, that is where the major late Roman fortifications have been identified, both in the form of the Saxon Shore forts and those on the Welsh coast, at Caernarvon, Cardiff and Holyhead (Jones and Mattingley 1990, 131–40). Having said that, when the field army, led by Count Theodosius, father of the future Emperor, was sent to relieve Britain from the crisis, he is said to have encountered marauding troops in the vicinity of London so we cannot rule out attacks penetrating inland perhaps as far as the West Midlands (Mattingley 2006, 235–7). The primary role of any troops stationed in the region, therefore, was probably to act in protection of other state officials in their duties, especially tax collectors, to ensure civil discipline as a quasi-police force, and to maintain and protect storage of the *annona* and, potentially, its redistribution. The logic would suggest, therefore, that the numbers involved were small and scattered. This being the case, there would not have been the need for specific fortifications to be provided for them, other than perhaps to protect and store the *annona*. Any troops could thus easily have been stationed in towns where they would be

of most use in their protection and policing roles.

The most compelling evidence of a military presence in the West Midlands comes in the form of a specific type of late Roman weapon: the *plumbata* or *martio-barbulus* – lead-weighted barbed darts thought to be anti-cavalry or anti-personnel weapons (Barker 1979; Knight 1998). Their presence reminds us that in the late Empire, fortified cities could also contain troops and be maintained as defensive strong points in addition to the forts that were also garrisoned at the same time. For Kenchester, the small scale of the site, together with its stone wall and bastions, indicates a militarised setting that perhaps a relatively small garrison could have defended. At Wroxeter, where the defences appear only to have been of timber and earth, and the circuit was considerably larger, it is difficult to see how robust a defence could be considered (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 179–84). Both of these sites are suggested to have been within the province of *Britannia Prima* (White 2007, 68–72). A late Roman strap end is also known from Whitley Grange villa, near Wroxeter, which might indicate the presence there of military or state officials (Gaffney and White 2007, 196–7, fig. 5.14.4). The walled towns of Alcester, Chesterton-on-Fosse (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 70–6; 249–52) and *Tripontium*, on Watling Street, possibly lay within the north-western part of *Maxima Caesariensis*. The hinterlands of these sites have produced a small cluster of buckles found by metal-detecting (Broomfield 2013; Williams 2013; Bolton 2007; 2014; Hawkes and Dunning 1961, fig.16a; Hawkes 1973), a swastika plate brooch (Domscheit 2014) and the finial of a crossbow brooch (Bolton 2015) that perhaps indicate a localised military presence here. Two other finds of military metalwork, a fine late fourth- or early fifth-century chip-carved strap end (Figure 2.9) and an amphora-shaped strap end, were respectively recovered by metal detectorists at Wall and near Trent Vale in Staffordshire (Bolton 2003; Gilmore 2013). These are possibly located in the province of *Flavia Caesariensis* although none of these provinces is clearly defined. Nonetheless, what is clear is that there is a thin scatter of late Roman finds associated with the army and state officials across the region.



Figure 2.9 Late Roman strap tag, Wall, Staffordshire (WMID5951) (Creative Commons licence for Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum)

Economic and social role

The link has already been made between the Roman army and its economic impact on the region through the driving of particular forms of production to meet the army's needs. Equally important was its role, especially in the early phases, of introducing Roman economic systems, not the least element of which was the foundation of urban settlements, an unprecedented settlement type in the region before the Conquest, with the sole exception perhaps of some of the larger hillforts. In this, as in so much else, the region differed from the south and east of Britain. In the West Midlands region, with the exception of parts of the southern counties (Herefordshire, Worcestershire and South Warwickshire), the use of both coinage and pottery in pre-Roman society was rare. All this changed radically, and in a very short space of time, when the Roman army arrived, bringing with it coinage and pottery, the latter both as a commodity in its own right, especially in the form of fine wares including delicate beakers and cups as well as the more ubiquitous samian, or as a container for equally exotic foodstuffs, such as wine and olive oil. The importation of Roman

cooking methods too – evidenced by the *mortarium* – indicates other less tangible changes, as does the widespread adoption of dress brooches, hair pins, glassware, and all the other wealth of material culture that we associate with the Roman World. To meet the demands of the army for coarse pottery, a pottery tradition was imported from the south-west region of the lower Severn Valley at Gloucester in the form of Severn Valley ware; this appears in the earliest military phase of sites in the region alongside the sole extensively used native pottery – Malvernian ware (Timby 1990; Peacock 1967). This same transmission can perhaps be seen in the earliest evidence of civilian settlement at Wroxeter. Here, in the 50s AD when the fortress was established, the earliest inhabitants of the *canabae* are using Dobunnic coins and Malvernian pottery, perhaps indicating that they derived not from the local population, whose knowledge of Roman forms of trading will have been minimal and whose use of coins and pottery was seemingly non-existent, but from the neighbouring tribe to the south who were already integrated into Roman ways of life (White, Gaffney and Gaffney 2013, 48). While this phase can only have lasted a short while, we cannot doubt its impact.

What will have been shocking perhaps to the local inhabitants will have been the speed at which the Roman army was able to build its fortifications and roads, and just as quickly sweep them away when no longer required. Pre-fabrication of timber buildings within forts was common, as was the salvaging of timbers when establishments were closed down. The reconstructions carried out at The Lunt in the late 1960s and early 1970s have given real insights into the durability of buildings and defences within military establishments, and how much resource was required (Hobley 1982; Shirley 2001, 49–73; Bidwell 2007, 45–6, 149). Compared to native use of raw materials, the Roman army will have appeared both profligate and effective in exploiting the same materials of production. It is clearly evidenced in iron making, for instance, which was undertaken at an unprecedented scale at *Ariconium*. While the Romans clearly did not introduce iron-smelting in the region, since there is unequivocal evidence for its pre-Roman production, the scale of the industry is massively expanded in the period (Jackson 2012, 189–96). Hand-forged nails will have been used by the hundredweight in building forts and fortresses, as was demonstrated by the demolition deposits at Inchtuthil (Pitts and St

Joseph 1985, 109–13; Manning 1985). Equally, the sheer quantities of material found on military sites makes them really stand out against the much quieter native landscapes where the widespread use of pottery, coins and glass was uncommon, especially in the north and west of the region. This differential alone is of vital significance in considering the research questions raised by the Roman army in the West Midlands.

Research questions

While there are aspects of military activity in the West Midlands that we do not understand, excellent progress has been made in recent times. In particular, long-awaited publications of key sites have now appeared (A. Jones 2002; 2005; 2011; 2012; Allen *et al.* 2015) which have helped in particular to clarify aspects of the material culture of the lesser forts of the region, while the publication of the only fortress in the region has similarly provided important insights into the rapidly changing nature of occupation on such sites (Webster 2002). Despite this, there are key research questions that can be posed and which will offer significant opportunities to advance our understanding of the impact of the Roman military on the region. Nor can it be assumed that because military sites are comparatively predictable that there is no need to investigate them further: what has been demonstrated here is that each site has unique characteristics that together offer a much more nuanced understanding of the military and its interaction with society than might have been imagined.

The most important element missing from our current understanding of Roman activity is the relatively slight amount of environmental data that has been collected. This is not aided by the poor soils of the region which are in general not conducive to the survival of animal bone. Nonetheless, ecofactual evidence in the form of pollen, beetles and plant remains do offer some hope of insights into changes in food production, including for instance the introduction of new species of food plants or domesticated animals as well as demonstrating changes in the broader patterns of flora caused by, for example, woodland clearance. However, in writing briefs for environmental archaeological work, it is important to consider that in looking for plant remains the range of preserved species will vary according to whether the samples have been charred, waterlogged or

mineralised. The first will preserve cereals and pulses, the second fruits, vegetables and herbs, and the last nuts and oil/fibre plants (van de Veen *et al.* 2007; van der Veen 2016, fig. 39.2). At Metchley, analysis of the pollen from the turves of the fort ramparts and from its ditches provided some environmental information for the locale (Jones 2002, 107–8; Jones 2011, 105; Hodder, this volume). Accordingly, a broad range of environmental sampling should be adopted in writing archaeological briefs for work within the region. Similarly, the rich cultural assemblages usually found on military sites suggest that full cultural material analysis should be a key component of a design brief, given that analyses of, for example, metalworking residues or pottery assemblages have already made significant contributions to the archaeology of the region, as at Pentrehyling for instance (Allen *et al.* 2015). The impact that the full panoply of environmental sampling and scientific dating can have has been amply demonstrated in the excavation of the Roman road at Sharpstone Hill, Shropshire where a normally intractable and poorly dated feature was able to offer a fully dated sequence due to the exemplary use of scientific methods (Malim and Hayes 2011). It is an example that needs to be followed.

In terms of site identification, programmes of aerial photography are still required to augment the generally excellent understanding of sites that have been discovered already. It is probable that other sites remain to be found and, where soils are generally unresponsive, a regular programme of flying may well capture sites that show only very occasionally or reveal details in known sites that otherwise had escaped detection. Not all sites are responsive to aerial photography, however, and here metal-detecting records from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (as at Great Witley – Deacon, this volume) or reported clusters of material may be significant in being able to confirm the presence and date of forts identified from the air. In this, the richness of the material culture of the Roman army, in contrast to the general paucity of rural sites in the region, means that they stand out much more clearly. A case in point is Upton Cressett, Shropshire which has produced very high levels of pottery and other finds and, in excavation, evidence for iron working. Early organic-tempered Severn Valley ware indicates an early date and the sheer quantity of material suggests the presence of a Roman fort in the vicinity, located perhaps

towards the edge of the Upton Cressett plateau and overlooking the local road system (Gaffney and White 2007, 150–2). While Upton Cressett is still unproven as a Roman military site, it nonetheless conforms to a predictive topographic model of where Roman military activity might be expected: other similar sites may well exist and could be actively sought.

The focus of future research could also be usefully directed to the later Roman period when the role of fortified towns apparently becomes much more important. The so-called *burgi* along Watling Street also demand more comprehensive investigation in order to understand them. A programme of geophysical survey may be the best immediate approach to these and, for that matter, to all of the other military sites that are available to such work: the spectacular results obtained by these surveys in Wales have demonstrated just how powerful such surveys can be (Hopewell 2010).

Lastly, the study of earlier excavations, and the rich research potential they represent, is an area that could usefully be exploited, taking into account recent advances in the dating of pottery. This is an area that can be tied into developer-funded work where sites are re-investigated in the modern era, as is the case at Red Hill, Shropshire (Evans, this volume), since earlier excavations were often working on sites that were much less damaged than is now the case.

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Roman Warwickshire

Paul Booth

Introduction

The last general review of the evidence for Roman Warwickshire (Booth 1996) principally took the form of a survey of the work of the previous 20 years or so, since an earlier brief summary by Webster (1974). More recent years have seen some significant publications of sites old and new, and a steady stream of PPG16-driven fieldwork. The latter has produced a substantial and significant body of new evidence which has only very recently been converted into a more widely accessible publication (Smith *et al.* 2016). There remains a small backlog of very important excavations dating back to the early 1980s and beyond, the publication of which would still be of great value for the archaeology of the region, not just of Warwickshire itself (see further below). The most significant publications of the last few years relate largely to the small town of Alcester and, importantly, to its immediate hinterland in the lower Arrow valley, as discussed below, but very recent publication has focused on the north-west of the county.

This review, like its predecessor, follows a fairly traditional framework, but it is hoped that the potential of Warwickshire's evidence to address a wide range of new questions will be apparent. The review outlines the character of the information base for Warwickshire and the state of knowledge in a series of chronological- and subject-based themes, and then summarises the main strengths and weaknesses of the data, indicating two types of areas for future work – those where our knowledge is deficient and requires active

enhancement, and those where Warwickshire possesses datasets of high quality which by further promotion can be used as models for the wider region.

This review was first presented at a seminar in 2002 and the text updated in January 2004. It has been summarily revised to take account of a limited number of developments to August 2008 and edited further in 2017 to remove anachronisms and update the bibliography as appropriate.

The character of the resource

Despite an antiquarian tradition extending as far back as references in Leland and with major local exponents such as William Dugdale, a tradition reflected in Haverfield's survey in VCH 1 (1904), there was no meaningful field examination of Warwickshire's Roman archaeology until the 1920s. Even then, and allowing for Thomas May's involvement at Tiddington (Fieldhouse *et al.* 1931), this work was amateur and small-scale and continued to be so after the Second World War. A more systematic approach to the problems of specific sites developed from the 1950s, in work still largely carried out by amateur groups, but with active encouragement and support from Graham Webster in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies of the University of Birmingham (e.g. Hughes 1960, 10). This pattern of activity was maintained for some considerable time, but began to change in the 1960s with the advent of funding from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works for a variety of excavations including those of specifically threatened sites. The most notable of these early rescue excavations was that directed by Christine Mahany at the small town of Alcester. It is particularly unfortunate for the study of such sites generally, and in the West Midlands in particular, that these excavations were not finally published until 30 years after their commencement, by which time their potential impact was lost, though the data presented remain extremely valuable (Mahany 1994; Cracknell and Mahany 1994) ([Figure 3.1](#)).

The scale of the 1960s' work at Alcester was not matched again until the end of the 1970s, when Warwickshire Museum initiated a series of major rescue excavations at Coleshill, Tiddington and Wasperton. Excavation in a development-led context, from small-scale housing development to gravel quarries, pipelines and infrastructure

projects such as roads, has continued ever since. Research excavation has tended to be carried out by local groups and on a small scale – though these groups have also been involved in sites threatened by development. The most significant excavation not driven by a specific development threat was that at The Lunt, Baginton, resulting in one of the most complete fort plans known from lowland Britain (Hobley 1969; 1973; 1975). Unusually, work at Broad Close, Mancetter, examining a part of the nationally important pottery industry, was occasioned principally by the threat of ploughing to pottery kilns.

The results of excavations from the 1960s onwards have formed the backbone of our knowledge of the Roman period in Warwickshire. There has been no significant tradition of widespread fieldwalking, though a number of sites, for example in the Dene valley and North Warwickshire, have been located in this way (McKay and Hingley 1984; McKay 1985; Hodder 1992) and more work of this kind is now being done in the south part of the county. There is also a large body of data from aerial photography, concentrated in, but not confined to, the Avon valley. This was the subject of a pioneering study (Webster and Hobley 1965), and more detailed plotting was carried out by Warwickshire Museum in the 1980s, but the area remains less well known in this respect than, for example, the Upper Thames Valley or parts of the Severn Valley. Geophysical survey has generally remained a site-specific tool and recent attempts to use magnetometry on a wider scale, for example in the context of M6 Toll project in north-west Warwickshire, were disappointing, probably principally because of generally unresponsive soil types or conditions in this part of the county.

The combination of excavation allied to development and the preponderance of aerial evidence in the Avon valley has tended to produce a somewhat skewed data set. Two major nucleated settlements, Alcester and Tiddington, are relatively well known through detailed excavation. The latter lies by the Avon and the former is situated at the confluence of two of its tributaries, so the relationship between nucleated and rural settlement, insofar as it is understood at all, is best considered in the context of these two key sites.

The late Iron Age

The transition from the late Iron Age into the early Roman period is also most clearly demonstrated in the Avon valley, where large-scale excavation in advance of gravel quarrying has permitted the identification of settlement sequences that span this transition, most particularly at Wasperton and Tiddington. Unusually for the West Midlands, Warwickshire produces evidence for a distinctive late Iron Age defined by ceramics. Material of this type, with (*inter alia*) grog-tempered fabrics and wheel-thrown forms characteristic of the south-eastern 'Belgic' tradition (*sensu* Thompson 1982, 4), occurs at a number of sites, particularly in the Avon valley. This material raises a number of important questions, of which its absolute dating remains one of the most crucial. There is, at present, no evidence that the appearance of this pottery can be dated much more than a generation before the Roman Conquest, and it might lie rather closer to that event, but in the absence of other types of dating evidence for the period this remains a subjective judgement. The distribution of 'Belgic' pottery on present evidence seems to be based principally on the Avon valley, with the most notable assemblages at Tiddington and Wasperton. The valley seems effectively to mark the frontier of the distribution of this pottery – in the north-west of the county it is conspicuous by its virtual absence, with tiny numbers of sherds from Coleshill and recently examined sites on the M6 Toll at Wishaw and (straying just over the county boundary) at Sutton Coldfield. It is not clear that every site occupied in the late Iron Age, even in the Avon valley, necessarily had access to this distinctive ceramic material (and it is equally uncertain if such variability was economically or socially determined). In these cases, therefore, it must be presumed that hand-made pottery of middle Iron Age type potentially continued in use up to the Conquest period, if not beyond (see further below for the specific case of Coleshill). In the absence of clear evidence for chronologically diagnostic morphological change in settlement types, the problem of distinguishing 'middle' from 'late' Iron Age sites therefore remains, and for those sites which do not have clear evidence of Roman activity, such as Park Farm, Barford (Cracknell and Hingley 1994) it is impossible to demonstrate if their decline is related to the Roman Conquest, to social and economic developments in the late pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA), or should be assigned to other factors and potentially earlier dates.

There are no certain nucleated settlements of late Iron Age date. None of the known hillforts demonstrably continues in occupation at this time, though this judgement may simply reflect the lack of detailed evidence for these sites in the county. The occurrence of 'Belgic type' pottery associated with the large, low-lying defended site at Wappenbury is of interest, but this pottery does not date the probable secondary phase of the 'hill fort' rampart, which appears to have a *terminus post quem* of at least the later first century AD and may have been much later (Booth 1991a; *contra* Stanley and Stanley 1960, 9); despite its lowland setting, which might suggest a late Iron Age date, this site is most likely to have originated earlier. Suggestions of a possible defended site at Botelers Castle to the south of Alcester can now be discounted (Jones *et al.* 1997, 8). Where its context is known, the distinctive late Iron Age pottery occurs in rural settlement enclosures of types seen both earlier and later.

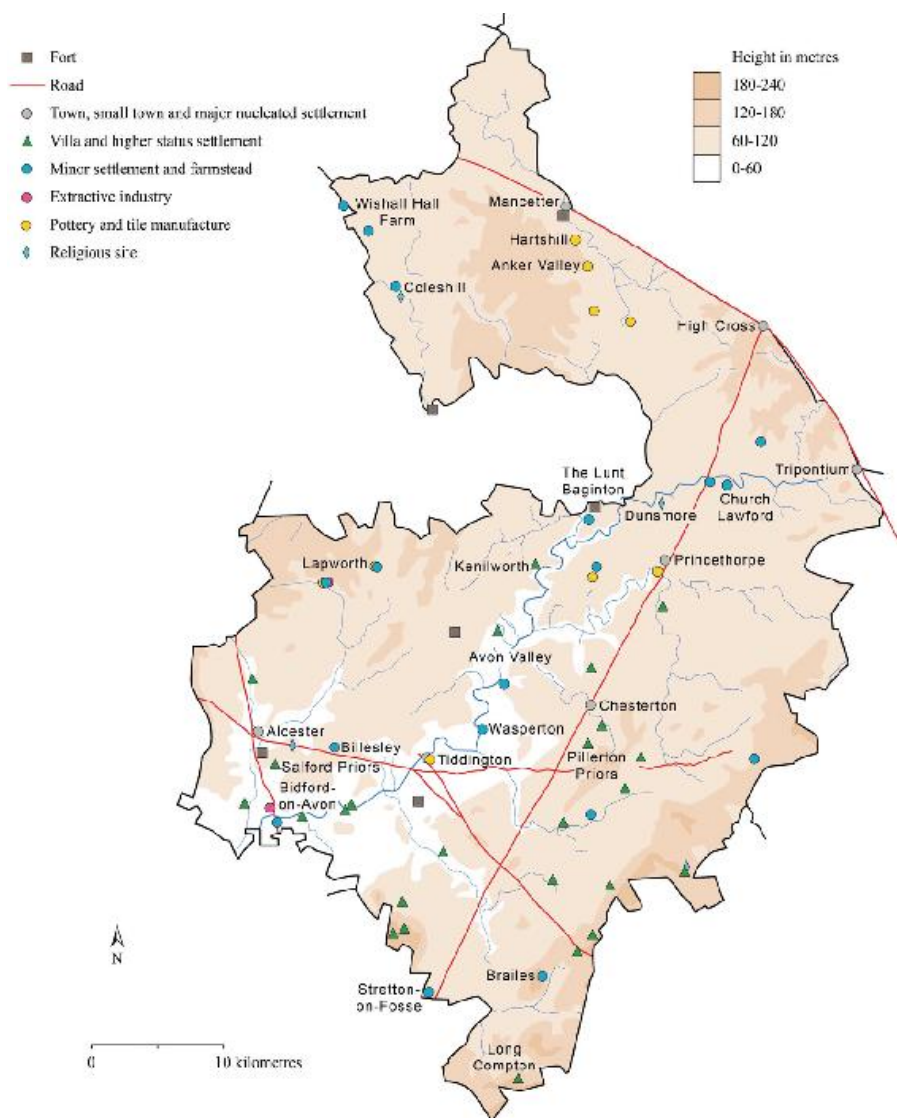


Figure 3.1 Map of Warwickshire in the Roman period (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

There is still insufficient evidence to allow generalisations to be made about continuity of settlement from the Iron Age into the Roman period – there are remarkably few sites with a clear sequence from middle Iron Age to early Roman and beyond. Sites such as Park Farm, Barford, for example, seem not to have been occupied into the Roman period in any significant way (Cracknell and Hingley 1994, 28–9) but it is impossible to say if the end of occupation fell a little before, at, or a little after the time of the Conquest. At Wasperton, continuity of settlement seems likely, but at Tiddington, where middle

and late Iron Age and early Roman material are all present, there seems to be a spatial distinction between middle and late Iron Age features, which indicates at least the reconfiguration of settlement, if not a hiatus; moreover the chronology of the late Iron Age phase remains uncertain, dependent as it is entirely upon the ceramic evidence. Another important site with a potential sequence is Coleshill, but here also the chronology is problematic (Magilton 2006). An unenclosed roundhouse settlement, associated with hand-made pottery of middle Iron Age character, lay directly under the subsequent temple complex, the earliest phase of which may perhaps be assigned to the later first century AD. The major problem is to determine the period of occupation of the roundhouses in the absence of absolute dating evidence. It is possible, for example, that the latest of them was post-Conquest in date since, in an area with no significant distinctive late Iron Age ceramic tradition (see above), pottery of middle Iron Age style presumably remained in use until supplanted by 'Romanised' coarse wares in the second half of the first century AD. Resolution of the chronology is critical to understanding the interpretation of the site, in particular the change of use from domestic settlement to temple complex.

Finally it may be noted that the distribution of Iron Age coins falls broadly into two, with concentrations of Corieltavian coinage in the north of the county, and *Dobunnic* coinage in the south. The distributions overlap at sites such as Alcester and Tiddington and at the former, at least, there is the possibility that some of these coins are early post-Conquest introductions in a military context. These distributions not only shed some light on the possible extent of tribal territories, with all the problems involved with such questions (cf. Booth 1996, 27, 52; Van Arsdell 1994), but also tell us a little about the character of late Iron Age society in the region in contrast, for example, with the coinless *Cornovii* to the north-west.

Conquest

There is some evidence for a Roman military phase at a number of sites in the county, three of which, to date, at Mancetter, Baginton and Alcester, have demonstrated particularly significant concentrations of military activity of the Conquest period and later. At the first of these, where a 'vexillation fortress' was succeeded by smaller installations

(Scott 1984; 2000), primary occupation may be dated to the early AD 50s, but apparently not earlier (Seaby and Perry 2000, 52). It is possible that a similar sequence was followed at Baginton, where early military activity might have been focused at Home Farm (Frere 1984, 295), some 250 m to the south of the well-known sequence of forts at The Lunt. The date of Home Farm is uncertain, but coins from The Lunt itself suggested that this site might not have been established until after the rebellion of Boudicca in AD 60 (Reece 1975, 24). It should be noted that Phase I features at The Lunt appear to have extended beyond the line of the eastern defences of the later fort and their character remains unclear (Hobley 1975, 17; cf. Booth 1996, 28). None of the work carried out subsequently to Brian Hobley's excavations has been published in detail. At neither Baginton nor Mancetter, however, is activity demonstrable beyond the early Flavian period at the latest, while at Alcester, where the earliest fort (south of the town) might perhaps have been of Claudian date (Booth 1996, 28), there are indications, though the evidence is less clear than one would wish, that military occupation within the area of the later town may have extended into the early second century (Booth and Evans 2001, 301–3). If so, it would parallel the situation indicated at some other sites in the region (such as ?Wall, Dodderhill (Droitwich) and possibly Metchley). The reason for this sequence of occupation, in contrast with the pattern seen at Baginton and Mancetter, is unclear. Development of Mancetter as a non-military settlement seems to have centred on Watling Street, some distance from the complex of military sites, while the character of the undoubtedly later settlement at Baginton, and its relationship to the fort, remains obscure.

The most visibly obvious legacy of the Conquest period is a network of major roads. The routes of these are tolerably well understood (e.g. Margary 1973, 280–90; cf. Booth 1996, 27), but minor roads remain largely unknown.

Nucleated settlements

Alcester, of course, developed into the principal nucleated settlement of the Roman period in the county and is arguably, with the publications of recent years (Booth 1989a; 1989b; Booth and Evans 2001; Cracknell 1989; 1996; Cracknell and Mahany 1994; Mahany 1994; Mudd and Booth 2001), one of the better-known 'small towns'

of Roman Britain, albeit that many important questions remain to be answered. Unusually for a site of this type there remains a significant lack of knowledge of the defended area compared with extramural settlement. This area not only lay at some distance from the two major roads which ran through the settlement but was also probably not a primary focus of settlement. Why it was selected for enclosure, probably in the late second century, has always been a puzzle that merits further attention; it might hint at a significant functional distinction between this and other parts of the settlement, with a religious focus as one (tentative) possibility. With a substantial occupied area, second- and fourth-century phases of defences and considerable structural diversity, including probable or possible 'public' buildings – a major storehouse (Booth 1989b) and a potential *mansio* (Mahany 1994, 157) – Alcester is clearly amongst the upper order 'small towns' (Burnham 1995, 10) and may have been a centre for local administration in the northern part of Dobunnian territory (Figures 3.2a and b).



Figure 3.2 (a) Timber piling forming the foundation of the fourth-century defences of Alcester; (b) Ghosts of timber framing within the lower section of the fourth-century defences of Alcester (Photographs: P. Booth)

For various reasons – though principally lack of development pressure and therefore of invasive fieldwork (not necessarily a bad thing) – knowledge of most other major nucleated settlements in the county has lagged behind. The sites in question are *Tripontium*, High

Cross and Mancetter on Watling Street, Princethorpe and Chesterton on the Fosse Way, and Tiddington, probably on a minor road running up the Avon valley from the salt-way crossing at Stratford. Publication of the important 1980s' work at Tiddington would significantly enhance our knowledge of the range of site types within the 'major nucleated settlement' bracket.

The Watling Street sites all had defended enclosures. In the case of Mancetter and *Tripontium* these were probably of later third-century date, broadly comparable with those of *Bannaventa* to the south-east and Wall to the north-west, while the defences of High Cross are known only from the air. *Tripontium*, one of the more extensively examined nucleated sites in the county, saw salvage recording work in advance of gravel extraction principally in the 1960s (Cameron and Lucas 1969; 1973). Since that time, work has continued on the site of a probable *mansio* outside the defended enclosure (Lucas 1984; Black 1995, 56, 72, 81). Many aspects of the site remain very poorly understood, however, and apart from the *mansio* complex, meaningful structural evidence is largely lacking. At Mancetter, the military sites and major foci of pottery production, both at some distance from the line of Watling Street, are better known than the defended enclosure which bestrides the road itself, though it is known that the enclosure overlay a sequence of timber structures (Mahany 1971). More recent work, however, has revealed a substantial structure adjacent to Watling Street to the west of this enclosure, but the details are uncertain.

The Fosse Way settlements also had defensive enclosures, of which that at Chesterton may, like Alcester, have had two main phases (the 1960s' excavations, never published, are conveniently summarised by Burnham and Wachter (1990, 249–52; cf. Booth 1996, 35–7). This may indicate a difference of character between this and some of the smaller settlements along the major Roman roads in the county, but there is still insufficient evidence to provide detailed definition of these differences. Princethorpe, for example, has seen only very small-scale examination in recent years (Cuttler and Evans 2000). A recent reassessment of Dorn, just over the county boundary in Gloucestershire, provides useful comparanda, however, though there has been no modern excavation here (Timby 1998, 390–9).

Tiddington, although sited just away from the major road network,

also had an apparently defensive enclosure of late Roman date, represented only by a substantial ditch, but its extent is uncertain. In possible contrast to some of the other nucleated sites Tiddington seems likely, on the basis of the excavated sample, to have been principally agricultural in character, though ‘ancillary’ features included two pottery kilns (Palmer 1982; 1983; Burnham and Wachter 1990, 310–3). The settlement has produced evidence for a variety of structures spanning all of the Roman period and ranging from circular buildings of Iron Age type to a small aisled building with added wings.

Further minor nucleated settlements probably include Brailes (away from the main road network), Bidford on Avon on Ryknild Street, and a small site at Billesley on the salt way between Stratford and Alcester. This last site may not have been particularly extensive, but its roadside location and the presence of two potential ‘strip’ buildings suggest its character (Palmer 2003). Coleshill may perhaps be added to the list; although the settlement aspect of this site is relatively little known, recent work is adding to the body of evidence for occupation south of the temple complex. Features such as the small bath building can be interpreted in either a settlement or a religious context, though in view of its proximity to the temple site the latter may be more likely. The principal importance of Coleshill lies, of course, in its temple complex, which is the only one of its kind currently known in the county and is at least of major regional significance, both for the evidence of a long structural sequence and because the *temenos* area and the buildings and other features contained within it were fully excavated (Magilton 2006; [Figure 3.3](#)). It is the location of this complex which suggests that the associated settlement may have been of nucleated character. The site may have been positioned in relation to a crossing point of a minor road over the River Cole just above its confluence with the Tame (cf. Magilton 1980, 27–9), though there is still no concrete evidence for the existence of such a road. More importantly perhaps, it is increasingly clear that substantial buildings of this kind were routinely located in major nucleated settlements and for the present, at least, it seems that rural shrines in our region were not embellished with substantial structures.

In the context of Coleshill, however, the chicken and egg question of primacy, whether of temple or, as this author would argue,

settlement, remains to be resolved. The lack of evidence for the latter and, indeed, for the putative road, makes this a major challenge.

Rural settlement

Rural settlement presents a different range of problems. The data set is very uneven: there are still relatively few well-excavated sites or well-understood landscapes recovered in other ways, although this situation has improved with recent work. There is still, understandably, a marked bias in our evidence towards what might be termed the broader Avon valley. A relative absence of villas has always been a characteristic of the rural settlement pattern – the 1996 estimate was 12–15, a figure based largely on the simple criterion of the presence of flue tile, in many cases known only from surface collection (but of course excluding such material from sites known to be of different character, such as major settlements). There is now evidence for up to another seven or eight potential villas from recent work of various kinds, all in the south of the county, including an example at Long Compton located from the air, one at Burton Dassett indicated by finds in a trench in the churchyard, a mosaic pavement of Corinthian type at Pillerton Priors (Sabin 2003; Cosh and Neal 2010, 396; [Figures 3.4](#) and [3.5](#)) and a site at Tysoe indicated by surface finds which include a tile comb (E. Shawyer, pers. comm.). There are very slight hints of clustering of villas in the vicinity of Alcester and Chesterton, but the sample size is probably too small for such conclusions to be very meaningful. Perhaps a third of all these sites have seen any excavation, the only extensive work being that carried out at Salford Priors during work on what is now the A46 south of Alcester (Palmer 2000). This site contained a number of well-scattered buildings, none of any great architectural pretension. Its relatively modest character may be typical of such sites in the county, but it is likely that the principal domestic building lay elsewhere, therefore giving a misleading impression of the character of the site from the structures examined.

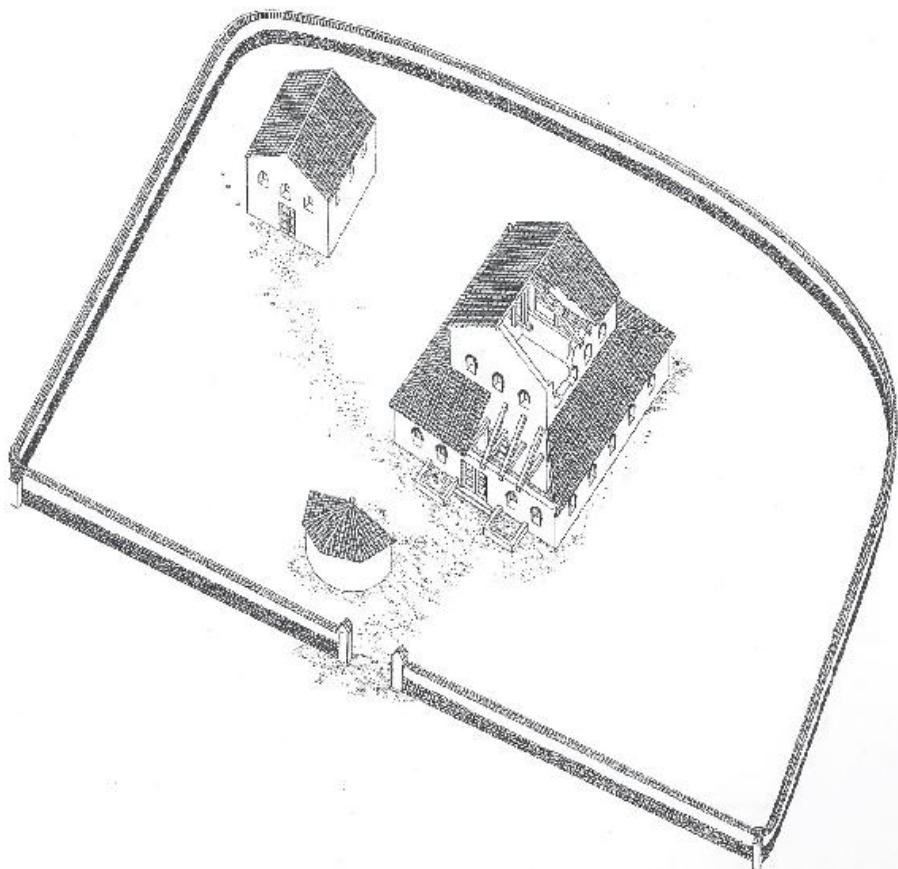


Figure 3.3 Reconstruction of the Temple at Coleshill (after Magilton 2006, fig. 40)

Lower-status rural settlements must have been numerous, but remain relatively little known in relation to their likely original numbers. Many sites on the Avon valley gravels known from the air could, on morphological grounds, be either Iron Age or Roman in date, and some are of course likely to be both (cf. Booth 1996, fig. 11). Rectangular or sub-rectangular enclosures seem generally to be characteristic of such settlements from the middle Iron Age onwards. The sequence is well illustrated at Salford Priors, where a rectilinear enclosure with a central roundhouse, of Iron Age date, had a smaller enclosure added to its east side in the Roman period. A few hundred metres to the south, first-century features included another rectilinear enclosure, while to the north contemporary settlement activity, including sub-rounded structures, may have been unenclosed. In the early second century these areas were cut through by a trackway upon which later ditch alignments were based. In the third century the

southern part of this area became part of the villa complex already mentioned (Palmer 2000).



Figure 3.4 Pillerton Priors mosaic under excavation showing existing plough damage (Scanned image from original photograph by Bryn Walters. Used with permission)

At the opposite end of the Avon valley, on Dunsmore in north-east Warwickshire, we see further evidence of continuity from the Iron Age into the Roman period, here in the form of the redefinition of existing ‘land unit’ boundaries. For example at Ling Hall Quarry, Church Lawford, an early Roman farmstead was based on one of the earlier boundaries. An interesting aspect of this site is the suggestion that barley was a favoured cereal crop because it would grow relatively easily on the nutrient-poor Dunsmore soils. Elsewhere spelt seems to have been the principal cereal, in line with the majority of evidence from lowland Britain.

Another characteristic of the Dunsmore area, and again one that seems to be reflected in some other sites in the county, is the fact that none of the sites known to be occupied in the early Roman period has a sequence that extends later than the second century AD. It is difficult to assess the significance of such a date range when sites are only partly excavated and later activity could have occurred in adjacent areas, but elsewhere, for example in the Upper Thames Valley, there is evidence for significant dislocation of settlement

patterns in the first half of the second century AD, and it is possible that a related phenomenon may be occurring in the Avon valley. There are, of course, sites which have a longer sequence of rural settlement; so for example at Wasperton, relatively low-status occupation continued through the Roman period, while at Wishaw Hall Farm, in the north-west of the county, a Roman enclosure that may originally have related to a sequence of middle and late Iron Age boundaries was apparently occupied into the fourth century (but not up to the end of that century). Many, if not most, of the early Roman rural enclosures produce evidence for roundhouses, if they contain any structural remains at all. Structural evidence on later Roman low-status settlements appears to be scarce. Again this is a pattern seen in the Upper Thames Valley. There are, however, rural settlement sites in which a progression from circular to rectilinear structures can be recognised, for example contained within curvilinear enclosures at Bidford Grange (Hart *et al.* 1991, 18) and within a rectilinear enclosure at Crewe Farm, Kenilworth (Ford 1971). Both sites may have seen a peak of activity in the second century but the Bidford Grange farmstead continued to be occupied through most of the Roman period. Circular structures were not, of course, confined to rural settlements, occurring also in nucleated sites such as Tiddington and Alcester.



Figure 3.5 A record of the Pillerton Priors mosaic by Luigi Thompson (Source: Luigi Thompson, with permission)

The agricultural economy is being increasingly elucidated through the study of plant and animal remains, although until recently useful data have been recovered from only a small number of sites, particularly Alcester, Tiddington and Wasperton (cf. Booth 1996, 45–6). At least the first of these can be characterised more as a consumer than a producer site, so the evidence for plant and animal husbandry will be skewed to reflect this. Significant new data are now available from Salford Priors. Here it is interesting that in terms of volume the principal samples, particularly of charred plant remains, are all of later Roman date. It is also striking that the range of species represented seems very reminiscent of that encountered at sites within Alcester, the small town within whose hinterland Salford Priors lay. The major cereal at Salford Priors was spelt wheat (Moffett and

Ciaraldi 2000), as it was also in Alcester at sites such as Coulters Garage, where large deposits of burnt chaff and grain were associated with a possible granary building (Colledge 1989). While spelt wheat was probably the principal cereal crop produced at many Warwickshire sites, the suggestion that barley was favoured on the more nutrient-poor soils of the Dunsmore gravels (see above) is particularly interesting and may be a pointer to identification of other aspects of local variation in the character of rural settlement. Another notable, albeit minor, component of the cereals at Salford Priors was rye. Often thought to be characteristic of the post-Roman period, there is increasing evidence for the cultivation of this species across the region, for example at a number of sites on the M6 Toll perhaps including Wishaw (Powell *et al.* 2008, 523).

Despite these hints of local variation in agricultural production there is little indication that the Warwickshire evidence, important as it may be, is intrinsically remarkable. In another area of economic activity, however, that of ceramic production, the situation is very different, and Warwickshire has wide-ranging evidence for pottery and tile manufacture at a variety of sites of differing scales (for a summary of some aspects, see Booth 1986). The most important of these is the Mancetter-Hartshill complex, an industry of national importance for its specialist production of mortaria. Excavations of some 61 kilns with associated features and pottery assemblages over a period from 1960 to 1984 remain unpublished. Unfortunately none of the smaller kiln sites examined in the 1980s and '90s has been published either, so understanding of the range of industries present is based largely on interim data with, in some cases, no detailed characterisation of the products involved. One site falling into this category, at Lapworth, demonstrates another characteristic of ceramic production at some sites in the county – the occurrence of pottery and tile kilns alongside each other. It has been suggested that ceramic production is often carefully situated to take account of the location of resources of raw materials, specifically timber, so that production at sites like Lapworth (pottery and tiles) and Arbury (tiles) is not determined by the presence of adjacent centres of consumption. In this respect these sites fit a recognised late Roman pattern rather than that of contemporary production elsewhere in second-century Britain, more commonly associated with nucleated settlements. With regard to

other evidence for 'industrial' activity there have been no significant new discoveries since the mid-1990s.

Summary: strengths and weaknesses of the data for Roman Warwickshire

Warwickshire has important evidence for the early military phase in the region and, with a ceramic tradition that permits identification of a distinctive 'late Iron Age' on the basis of part of its material culture, the potential to identify non-military sites of this period and compare and contrast these with the settlement evidence of earlier and later periods. There can be little doubt, however, that routine application of radiocarbon dating to 'middle Iron Age' sequences is of great importance, not only for understanding these sites in their own right and but also for establishing the character of base-line rural settlement as a background to possible political, social and economic changes in both the LPRIA and in the post-Conquest period.

In terms of major nucleated settlement Warwickshire has good evidence, particularly from Alcester, which may have followed a well-established model of town development around an early military nucleus. Like Alcester, other major settlements developed mainly along the principal Roman roads but the importance, if any, of a military background in their establishment is generally unclear. Equally, however, there is generally no evidence for the existence of significant pre-Roman settlement at these locations – Tiddington, not on a major road, is clearly an exception to this – and a primarily economic driving force may provide the best model to explain the growth of some of these sites: was this was an organic process or one stimulated by the imposition of official establishments such as *mansiones*? The broad distribution pattern of upper-echelon settlements is tolerably well understood, though detailed evidence for some is largely lacking and there may be a serious danger in assuming that Alcester is representative of all the sites in this group. Some minor nucleated settlements may yet remain to be located. The inter-relationship of the more important of these sites – Alcester and probably also Chesterton – with the others, and the degree of integration of all the larger sites into the wider rural settlement pattern, is less clearly understood.

Other particularly strong aspects of the data for Roman Warwickshire include the evidence for ceramic production, but much of the potential of this evidence remains to be realised through detailed publication of the sites in question. An exploratory study (Booth 1991b) also attempted to use ceramic evidence to address questions relating to the social and economic status of settlements. It is believed that the potential of this approach could be developed further (as shown for example by Jerry Evans 2001) and in other areas of artefact and ecofact studies beyond ceramic evidence (cf. for example Allason-Jones 2001). A general assessment of the sites examined in the course of the M6 Toll project in the north-west of the county suggests significant differences in the use of material culture between these sites and those found further south and east, for example in the Avon valley (Powell *et al.* 2008, 527–8). The significance of such differences merits serious consideration.

Relative weaknesses in our data relate most importantly to rural settlement. Evidence for this is good in places, but understanding of the rural settlement pattern and the associated agricultural economy is patchy and still excessively dependent upon data from gravel sites in the Avon valley. A further major weakness concerns the archaeology of the dead. Cemeteries and more scattered burials are known from a number of sites, principally Alcester (Mahany 1994, 144–7), *Tripontium* (Cameron and Lucas 1969, 139, 141–4; 1973 *passim*) and Tiddington (Palmer 1982, 5, 14–6) amongst the major settlements, and Stretton on Fosse (Gardner *et al.* 1982, 9, 30; Ford 2003) and Wasperton (Crawford 1983, 25–6; Scheschkewitz 2006) amongst the rural ones. Both Stretton on Fosse and Wasperton lie in close proximity to, and share some aspects, of burial practice with early Anglo-Saxon burials, and are of particular importance in relation to the question of rural population survival in the post-Roman period (White, this volume). Overall, however, this is a very small sample and few even of the assemblages within it have been studied systematically. Such evidence as there is suggests a later Roman date for most, if not all, of these burials. In a loosely related sphere, that of religious practice, coherent evidence, whether for communal or individual activities, is again scarce, with the singular exception of Coleshill. In particular, the absence of definite shrines or temples in the larger settlements is noteworthy, though probably fortuitous.

Some questions and priorities for further work

It is perhaps inevitable that the preceding discussion and what follows bear strong similarities to the summary and conclusions of the last review (Booth 1996, 54–5), though it is hoped that some of the outstanding questions are a little more nuanced than was the case previously. It is still true, however, that there is no single subject area relating to Roman Warwickshire for which we can claim to know all that we may reasonably want to. Future work should therefore allow for progress on a broad front, and most new large-scale fieldwork projects arising through the planning process without regard to specific archaeological agendas can probably contribute significantly to our overall picture. Site-specific issues remain important, both for large and small settlements, well-known or poorly understood. Even for sites such as Alcester, for example, a simple research agenda might seek to address basic topics such as (1) definition and refinement of chronology of probable and possible military features; (2) location and definition of (particularly early) cemeteries; (3) characterisation of occupation within the defended area; (4) examination of the possible *mansio* to determine its true function; (5) further definition of the range and scale of economic activities. For most of the major settlements, fundamental questions relating to their origins, chronology of development, and range of economic and other functions remain to be addressed. Related to these questions is the equally fundamental one of how these sites were integrated and interacted with their rural hinterlands – itself an issue potentially of relevance for the very nature, density and economic character of rural settlements.

The data to characterise rural settlement in these terms still hardly exist, though they are more numerous in the Avon valley than elsewhere. There are hints that there may have been differences in the character of rural settlement between the three broad north-east to south-west trending zones of the county: Arden, Avon valley and Feldon. One such hint is the distribution of villa sites – particularly as expanded by recent discoveries. On present evidence only Salford Priors and Sambourne, both in the Arrow valley and in the hinterland of Alcester, lie north of the Avon. There is no suggestion that the Feldon and Cotswold fringe of the county should be seen as characterised or dominated by villa-type settlement in a way that

might have applied a little further south, for example in north Oxfordshire. Nevertheless, the implication of recent discoveries is that this may be a landscape in which villas played a significant, rather than just an occasional, role. In the absence of detailed examination of any of these sites, however, we have no evidence for the inter-relationship, if any, between villa and non-villa settlement. Examination of this relationship, both in this area and elsewhere in the county, will require much more evidence than is currently to hand – accumulation of such basic evidence must be a priority and it will depend upon economic and environmental data rather than the recovery of mosaic pavements, important though these may be. Precisely the same situation prevails north of the Avon. The differences in settlement character between Feldon and Arden in the medieval period are well known (e.g. Roberts 1978) and while this need not bear any direct relationship to the settlement patterns of the Roman period, it would be surprising if there was no variation to reflect the broad differences in landscape character which seem to have been established over a very long period. The existence of potentially marked differences between these areas in the use of material culture has already been indicated and its analysis may provide a particularly useful way in which to consider this question (see further below).

The chronological aspect of rural settlement also requires extensive and detailed consideration. A number of sites appear not to have outlasted the second century AD, and it is increasingly possible that this is related to a broad chronological trend in rural settlement in the county, particularly in view of the rather clearer evidence for widespread dislocation in rural settlement patterns to the south in the Upper Thames Valley in the second century (cf. Henig and Booth 2000, 106–10). The Warwickshire rural settlement record needs to be considered in the light of such possible comparanda, but the evidence for possible major chronological (and other) trends has to be satisfactorily mapped before they can be interpreted.

Understanding of wider questions of society/regional identity may also be relevant to these major trends as well as other issues. The Avon valley may have been a frontier zone for ‘Belgic type’ ceramics shortly before the Roman Conquest, but does this reflect anything more than the adoption by the local populace of a new technology? Is

there anything to be made of a correlation between this distribution and the tribal territory of the *Dobunni*? At a slightly later period the distribution of Severn Valley ware has been seen as potentially significant in these terms (Evans 1994, 148–9). This may be so, but this author would place the border between the *Dobunni* and *Corieltavi* a little further east than Evans implies. The potential significance of Coleshill as an indicator of tribal boundaries, in this case most likely between the *Corieltavi* and the *Cornovii*, has been remarked on before (e.g. Magilton 1980, 29), but the ‘Stevens hypothesis’ on which this interpretation was based is now considered to be problematic (Powell *et al.* 2008, 531). With parts of the county lying potentially within at least three tribal territories, there is scope to develop further the question of the relationship (if any) between aspects of material culture – perhaps most clearly seen in terms of pottery distributions – and such territories. A notable characteristic of recent fieldwork on the line of M6 Toll through Staffordshire, the margins of Birmingham and parts of north-west Warwickshire, was the relative paucity of Roman finds (as well as those of several other periods) even from quite substantial sites. Arguments from such negative evidence can be difficult to sustain, but a superficial judgement is that rural settlements probably in Cornovian territory were ‘poor’ in terms of material culture, particularly when sited away from major settlement foci or main road lines, a phenomenon widely recognised further west (cf. White and Gaffney 2003, 222–3; Gaffney and White 2007). Careful comparative studies could first examine the validity of this observation and then seek to explain it.

Questions of identity of communities and societies are also important at the end of the Roman period. Here we have particularly important evidence, with the suggestion that the cemeteries at Wasperton and Stretton on Fosse show potential continuity of at least some rural populations into the Anglo-Saxon period. Any future discoveries of sites of this type should deploy isotope and perhaps DNA analysis and other techniques to the question of determining the degree of similarity or difference between successive or contemporary populations. This analysis should also embrace material from ‘early Anglo-Saxon’ cemeteries. Such an approach carries implications for standards of recovery and sampling of appropriate material (in order to avoid contamination) that will impact on field methodologies.

Outstanding publications

Repeated reference has been made to a small number of key outstanding publications, principally of large-scale excavations carried out in the 1980s. The most important of these sites, in no particular order, are Tiddington, for its contribution to understanding of nucleated settlement, Wasperton, for its contribution to knowledge of the long-term development of rural landscapes (the important cemetery evidence has now been published; Scheschkewitz 2006; Carver *et al.* 2009), and Mancetter-Hartshill, for its contribution to pottery studies. All of these sites can be considered to be of major regional, if not of national, importance and in all cases significant post-excavation work has already been carried out, though not recently. The detailed publication of these key excavations, despite their vintage, will contribute very considerably to our growing understanding of the period, complementing the data being derived from current work. Completion of these reports should be prioritised where possible.



Figure 3.6 Swastika plate brooch (NMGW-798BAB), dated to the second or third century. A regionally important find discovered in the Offchurch area by a metal detectorist and

There are a number of lesser, but still locally/regionally important sites also deserving of publication. The pottery kilns at Lapworth were excavated in 1988 in advance of the construction of the M40, with no provision for further work. The status of 1980s' excavations at Home Farm, Baginton is unclear. Of a much earlier vintage, the 1971 excavation at Crewe Farm still has an important contribution to make to our understanding of rural settlement, but it is uncertain how much material survives from this site. Amongst more recent work, that on rural settlement in Dunsmore is particularly significant and would merit formal publication, as would the report on the roadside settlement at Billesley. Finally, the Portable Antiquities Scheme has clearly demonstrated its potential for locating finds of regional and local importance but integrating its discoveries at the regional level remains a challenge (Figure 3.6).

Note and acknowledgements

This survey is considerably shorter than that produced by the present writer in 1996. An attempt has been made here to reference all significant new work carried out since then, but the reader is referred to the earlier survey for references up to that time, where not given here. I am deeply indebted to Nicholas Palmer and Stuart Palmer of Warwickshire Museum for helpful comments and suggestions and for providing much new information. They do not necessarily agree with all the interpretations offered here – errors and inadequacies in these are my own. I am also extremely grateful to Grahame Soffe and Luigi Thompson for supplying illustrations of the Pillerton Priors mosaic and excavation.

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Worcestershire in the Roman period

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Introduction

Understanding the Roman archaeology of Worcestershire

This paper is a comprehensive updating and expansion of recent overviews and syntheses, incorporating new information drawn from both recent fieldwork and the completion of post-excavation projects. A summary paper on Worcestershire in the Roman period was presented at the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology seminar in 2002, and subsequently published online (Lockett 2002). Since then, detailed consideration has been given to a number of aspects of Roman Worcestershire, in particular in *Archaeology and Aggregates in Worcestershire: a Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Morton and Holbrook 2007) and *An Outline Resource Assessment and Research Framework for the Archaeology of Worcester* (Worcester City Council 2007). These two local resource assessments have made a great deal of archaeological information widely available, with extensive reference to grey literature reports. The publication of the research framework for the West Midlands in the Roman period has provided a broader context (Esmonde Cleary 2011), and further context is given by the Roman Rural Settlement Project (Brindle 2014b; Smith *et al.* 2016).

The paper draws extensively on Morton and Holbrook (2007) for its main structure and for commentary on sites on the lowland gravels, and this formed the basis for a first draft in 2009. Principal contributions by the other authors include Worcester (James Dinn), Droitwich and salt production (Derek Hurst), iron-working (Robin Jackson), pottery production, ceramic ovens and artefacts (Jane Evans), and agricultural production and environmental change (Elizabeth Pearson). However, the paper is in essence a collaborative effort. Final editing was undertaken by James Dinn and Jane Evans.

The evidence presented is drawn from a small number of published reports, a much larger number of ‘grey literature’ reports, and information recorded in the Worcestershire County Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Worcester City HER (records respectively prefixed WSM and WCM). Crucially, the paper has benefitted from the results of a very large increase in commercial fieldwork on Roman sites between 2002 and 2015. The approach adopted here is largely descriptive and follows a fairly traditional approach to ordering the data, acknowledging that as a necessary first step towards more thematic approaches (cf. Esmonde Cleary 2011).

Chronological and geographical framework

The dates of c AD 50 and 410 for the start and end of the Roman period in this area no longer carry their former weight. Current research frameworks for the period have a rather different approach to chronology, and the emphasis is now on long-term processes of social and economic change (Esmonde Cleary 2011).

In the traditional map of Roman Britain most of Worcestershire lay within the *civitas* of the *Dobunni*, with the northern part of the county falling within the territory of the *Cornovii* (e.g. Jones and Mattingly 1990, map 4:24; [Figure 4.1](#)). The *Silures* occupied the area to the south-west, perhaps including the Malvern Hills. The boundaries of the civitates are almost entirely modern conjecture, however, and it is debatable how much weight should be ascribed to this apparent political division. Nevertheless there appear to be significant contrasts between the archaeological resources of the west and north and the south (in particular south-east) of Worcestershire, reflecting differences in terms of settlement forms and patterns, economic links, and patterns of social and cultural expression. These contrasts are

identified by Esmonde Cleary (2011, 133–4) with a ‘Cotswold/Avon zone’ to the south-east, and are also obvious in the preliminary results of the Roman Rural Settlement Project, where they can be seen to form part of a wider pattern (Brindle 2014b).

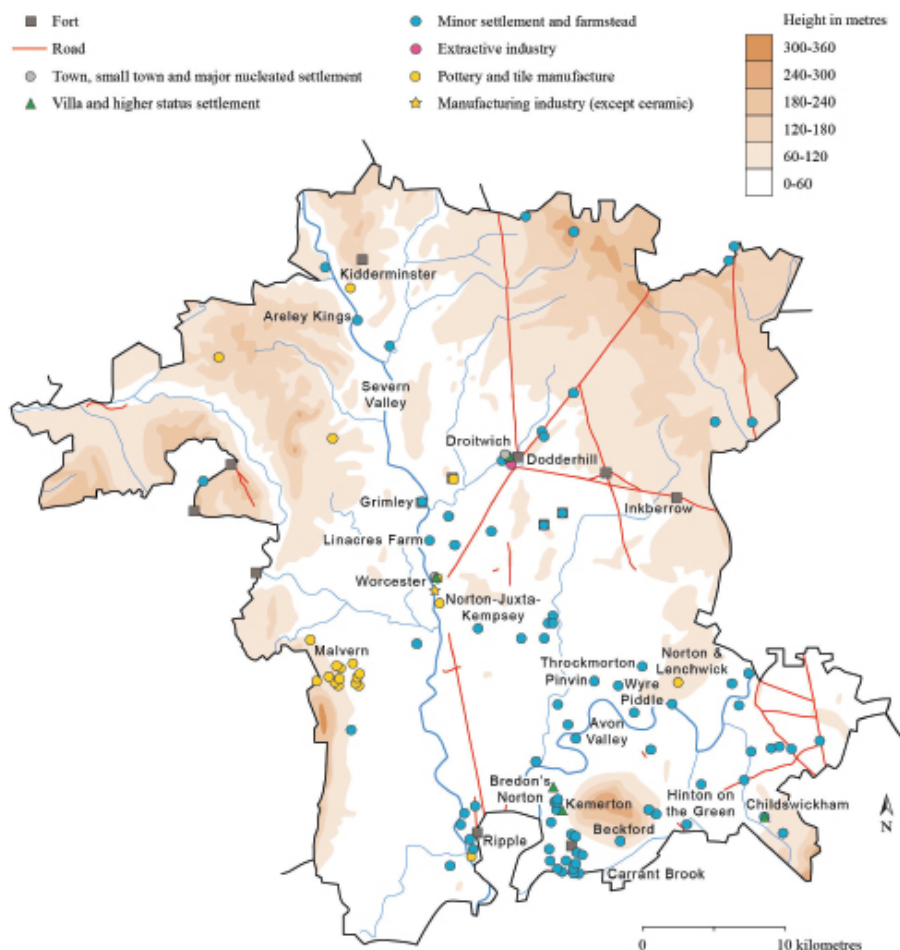


Figure 4.1 Map of Worcestershire in the Roman period showing sites mentioned in the text (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

The Roman army is thought to have reached this part of the West Midlands in AD 47 or shortly thereafter, though archaeological evidence attributable to this period is very rare (Figure 4.2). Within the Roman period it is often convenient to use the terms early and later Roman, the division between the two occurring in the early third century when rapid inflation led to coinage having a sufficiently small face value to facilitate its use in everyday transactions. The third

century was also a time of change in the pattern of rural settlement in parts of western Britain, in some areas typified by increasing numbers of villas. While most commentators accept that the cessation of central imperial government around AD 410, and with it the issuing of coinage, led to a collapse of a market-based economy, important changes in settlement and economy had occurred several decades before this date. For instance, many sites in Worcestershire show evidence of decline, or had been entirely abandoned, by the mid-fourth century. The nature of, and reasons for, this profound change in the settlement pattern are an important gap in our understanding. It is also unclear how long into the fifth century a recognisably Romano-British way of life continued. Some scholars have argued strongly that all had been wiped away within a generation or so (e.g. Esmonde Cleary 1989), while others have argued for a continuity of tradition lasting for much longer (e.g. Dark 1994; White 2007).



Figure 4.2 WAW-ADC644 – An early continental plate brooch of the invasion period found by a metal detectorist in the parish of Childswickham (Bolton 2011) (Creative Commons image for Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum)

Sources and variability of evidence

One of the great strengths of Romano-British archaeology compared to the immediately preceding and succeeding periods is the visibility of sites. The ubiquity of artefacts (especially pottery) renders sites susceptible to discovery through structured surface collection, chance discovery, and by metal detecting. It has also long been recognised that the gravel terraces of, in particular, the Avon and Carrant Brook valleys lend themselves to the production of cropmarks (Webster and

Hobley 1964), and parts of the Severn Valley have a similar character. On morphological grounds, many cropmarks can be assigned to a broadly late prehistoric or Romano-British date (Figure 4.3). The susceptibility of underlying geology to produce cropmarks varies considerably across the county, and consequently a distribution based purely on this source of evidence is heavily biased. Much that is known of both Iron Age and Roman rural settlement in Worcestershire is focused on the gravel terraces in the south of the county, a bias which is exacerbated by a higher intensity of archaeological fieldwork in areas where known archaeological remains are more frequent (Morton and Holbrook 2007).



Figure 4.3 Aerial photograph of an enclosed Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Hinton on the Green, in the valley of the Carrant Brook (Photograph by Mike Glyde)

In Worcestershire, the under-representation of Roman settlements on geologies other than gravel terraces has certainly changed since the implementation of PPG16 in 1990. Discoveries associated with development, such as a villa at Childswickham found during routine monitoring of groundworks for the laying of a new water pipeline (Patrick and Hurst 2004), have played an important role in the understanding of site distributions. Archaeological monitoring of pipeline and road schemes has provided a valuable record of what are largely haphazard transects across varied geologies and landscapes,

and such work has shown that patterns of Roman landuse were highly variable. The routine evaluation by trenching of larger ‘landscape scale’ development sites has supported this view. In general, the model of intensive exploitation and settlement on the river terraces has been substantiated, although some areas dominated by heavy clay and clay with gravel soils have also produced evidence of dense settlement. One example, lying just on the margins of the gravel terraces, is the group of five sites excavated along, and close to, the route of the Wyre Piddle Bypass which appear to have had largely pastoral economies (Griffin *et al.* 2005; Vaughan 2005; Robin Jackson, pers. comm.).

Elsewhere, on poorly drained soils, the relative paucity of Roman finds’ scatters from fieldwalking and monitoring along pipeline routes (Dinn and Hemingway 1992, Jackson and Hurst 1994; Jackson *et al.* 1996a; Dalwood *et al.* 1998) is consistent with a settlement pattern based around dispersed farmsteads involved in pastoralism, if it is accepted that low density finds’ scatters are often an indication of manuring associated with arable farming. It remains possible that certain areas were characterised by discrete islands of settlement within relatively ‘empty’ landscapes (i.e. extensive areas of pasture, woodland, wood pasture and ‘waste’), but models of settlement pattern based purely upon geology and soils should be treated with caution.

Only with the extensive findspot data from metal-detecting activity, where this has been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), has it been possible to analyse finds’ distributions for the period (Brindle 2014a, 48–67).

Resource assessment: Roman Worcestershire

Military sites

Roman military sites are sparse in Worcestershire compared to the neighbouring counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire. During the 1960s and 1970s there was a research focus on the archaeology of the Roman army in the West Midlands (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 123); this led to the investigation of a number of sites in Worcestershire. A number of forts and marching camps are recorded on the HER, although for most of these the evidence is not conclusive.

The best-excavated site is the fort at Dodderhill, Droitwich (McAvoy 2006), where occupation was dated to c. AD 60–8. As well as the defensive circuit, internal features were located in the most recent work here, including a road and rubbish pits; the foundation trenches of possible barrack blocks had been identified during earlier excavations (Whitehouse 1962). The nearby site at Crutch Lane (Droitwich) may be a fort or a marching camp (Hurst *et al.* 1988).

In the Severn Valley, forts have been postulated at Worcester and Grimley. At Worcester, discussed in more detail below, a Conquest period fort seems likely, and locating such a fort has formed a central part of the research framework for Worcester since the 1960s (Barker 1969a, 16). Nevertheless, despite sustained archaeological activity in the city over the subsequent half century, firm evidence is still lacking (Dalwood and Edwards 2004, 13). The artefactual evidence from sites such as Deansway and Sidbury reflects a ‘clear military presence’ but not necessarily ‘intensive military activity’ (Crummy 2004, 435).

At Grimley, 5 km north of Worcester, a triple-ditched enclosure was initially interpreted as a fort (Webster 1956). However, this site poses problems of interpretation. The only period in which a fort in this location would obviously make sense is during the first century AD. The dating evidence does not support this, although it is accepted that none of this comes from a primary context and only limited areas have been examined. Pottery recovered from more recent investigation of the ditch system dated to the second and third centuries AD, while features outside the ditches dated to the third and fourth century (Lockett 2001). Military sites in Wales and the Marches are known to have later activity (e.g. Pentrehyling, Allen *et al.* 2015), but the absence of a diagnostically first-century military assemblage at Grimley is more conclusive in rejecting this site (Webster 2017). Further work is required before firm conclusions can be reached, although given that further cropmark enclosures (albeit less regular and only single- or double-ditched examples) have been identified in the Grimley/Holt area, interpretation of all these sites as rural farmsteads is perhaps more plausible.

Three other sites which were originally identified as forts have since been re-interpreted. At Blackstone (near Bewdley) a rectilinear double-ditched enclosure, originally identified as a Roman fort in the 1950s, has since been shown to date from the first century BC, and

was possibly associated with a trading function (Hurst *et al.* 2008). Re-interpretation as farmsteads is favoured for two other highly doubtful military sites, at Perdiswell, north Worcester (WCM 91010) and at Kemerton (WSM 05738).

Transport

Roads

The principal Roman road in Worcestershire linked Droitwich and Worcester with Gloucester (Margary 1973: road 180), following a broadly north to south route, east of the Severn. A possible Roman milestone, dedicated to Constantine, was found close to this route at Kempsey, just south of Worcester (Haverfield 1901, 210). Two routes led northwards from Droitwich: one continued on a north-eastern alignment towards the first century AD forts at Metchley and, thereafter, to Wall on Watling Street; the other (Margary 1973: road 192) branched northwards, seemingly towards the fort at Greensforge. Other roads also connected with Droitwich both from the east and the west, though that to the west follows an uncertain course. Another major north–south road (Ryknield Street) passed along the eastern edge of the county.

Routes to the west of the Severn are almost entirely unclear. There was probably at least one ford across the Severn at Worcester, and possibly a bridge: given that a bridge existed at Gloucester, the lowest crossing point of all, where the river was an even greater obstacle, this is certainly feasible, though Carver's suggestion (1980, 20) that the presence of iron slag in the medieval bridge piers is evidence that the bridge itself may have had Roman origins is unlikely to be valid. While no certain traces of roads on the west bank have been located, excavations at Newport Street (Davenport 2016) and The Hive have recorded roads heading for the east bank of the river, and slag deposits were identified in boreholes at Worcester Arena. Worcester's High Street and its northern continuations are believed to have Roman origins, though without firm archaeological evidence, and another north–south road has also been identified running parallel, further west. This might have been a purely local street serving the extra-mural suburbs. Evidence for other roads is discussed below.

Other fords across the Severn may also be predicted, based on the number of fords present before the raising of river levels in the mid-

nineteenth century. Such fords were probably commoner above Worcester as the river-bed becomes much muddier downstream from the city, in which case the location of a crossing at Worcester would be of greater significance as potentially more dependable for general use.

Rivers

Industries in the county, principally at Worcester (iron), Malvern (pottery) and Droitwich (salt), were highly developed, and seemingly successful. These industries would have benefitted from the use of water transport, in particular on the Severn, for the transport of both raw materials (including wood and charcoal) and products, and there is now some supporting evidence for this. Allen and Fulford's analysis of pottery data from sites in the region illustrates the influence of the river on the distribution of Severn Valley ware (Allen and Fulford 1996, 262, fig. 14a, b). In contrast, the same study suggests the Severn may not have been a major trade route for Black-Burnished ware 1 (*ibid*, 260), the proportions of BB1 at sites along the river being relatively low. It will be possible to study such distribution patterns in more detail as more quantified data, from a wider range of sites, becomes available. It is likely that quite complex trade patterns were involved. It may, for example, be that the relatively low proportions of BB1 on these sites reflects the dominance of more local cooking vessels, from Malvern, and more local supplies of salt, from Droitwich.

Engineering and dredging works have produced Roman finds from the riverside and river-bed since the mid-nineteenth century, although no structural remains have been reported (Hurst and Miller 2008). The finds from the building of the locks at Worcester and Tewkesbury may relate to little more than ephemeral bank-side activity. Similarly, the discovery of Severn Valley ware pottery in the bed of the modern river at Hanley Castle may just reflect a casual loss, though its association with quantities of medieval material may imply a similar origin, the medieval material undoubtedly deriving from the handling of goods at a quay-side in this vicinity.

Small towns

There were no major Roman towns within Worcestershire, although there were two 'small towns', at Worcester and Droitwich, which were

respectively involved in industrial-scale production of iron (and probably other materials) and of salt. The evidence from both towns was reviewed by Burnham and Wachter (1990), but since that date substantial excavations in both settlements have produced extensive new information.

Worcester

The size, shape and character of Roman Worcester have only recently begun to emerge with any clarity, through the cumulative impact of development-related fieldwork on over 50 sites since 1990 (Worcester City Council 2007, 21–46), and a small number of excavations from before that date, principally Sidbury (Darlington and Evans 1992) and Deansway (Dalwood and Edwards 2004). This fieldwork has included a series of medium- and large-scale excavations, concentrated in the northern part of the town (Newport Street: Davenport 2016; City Campus, Castle Street: Sworn *et al.* 2014; sites in The Butts: Butler and Cuttler (eds) 2011; Police Station, Castle Street: Edwards *et al.* 2002; City Arcades: Griffin *et al.* 2004). Key unpublished sites include Blackfriars (1985–86), the Magistrates Court, Castle Street (2000: Boucher forthcoming) and The Hive, The Butts (2008–09: Bradley *et al.* forthcoming).

The term ‘small town’ is a misnomer in spatial terms, as the town, which may be identifiable as *Vertis* (Ravenna Cosmography), covered a wider area than the medieval city, occupying some 70–95 ha, or perhaps more. To put this in perspective, the enclosed area of the Cornovian *civitas* capital at Wroxeter was, at 78ha, the fourth largest town in Roman Britain. Occupation in Worcester was focused on a spit of gravel, up to about 500m wide, just upstream of the confluence of the Severn and the Frog Brook, a minor tributary, but also extended on to and perhaps across the floodplains of both watercourses.

Early records of Roman remains in Worcester suggested areas of ‘Romanised’ occupation, including masonry buildings with mosaics. However, the very earliest identification of Roman Worcester was Yarranton’s quarrying of iron-rich slag in the mid-seventeenth century, which recognised the industrial nature of the place, and Worcester has often been characterised as an iron-working town. Excavation in the 1950s and 60s (the first ‘modern’ archaeological work in Worcester: Gelling 1958; Barker 1969b) identified the defences, and a developed

picture of the town was produced for the first time by Barker (1969a). The results of more recent work have tended to emphasise the variable character of the Roman town, and expanded the understanding of its industrial base to include other metals, glass, and perhaps pottery.

The origins of Roman Worcester appear to lie in the Iron Age, and there may also have been an early military presence. Cunliffe (1991, 174) suggested at one time that Worcester might have been a late Iron Age *oppidum* site, on the strength of coinage finds. Agriculture, and scattered, extensive, domestic activity, appear to have been dominant either side of the Conquest, though the number of Iron Age coins from Worcester may indicate the growth of a market economy. A recently excavated small enclosure at Bromwich Lane Tennis Club, St John's, outside the area later occupied by the town, is suggested to have functioned as a Conquest-period trading post (Figure 4.4). There is a possibility that iron-working was already a feature of the pre-Conquest settlement.

Barker's (1969b) observations of the defensive sequence at Lich Street (excavated in a very small area) are reflected in the results of more recent excavation at King's School SPACE, Severn Street (Napthan 2014). At both sites there was some excavation of both the rampart and ditch. At Severn Street, the complex rampart (of multiple phases, some associated with internal post and beam structures) was devoid of Roman material, and this, combined with early Iron Age radiocarbon dates, indicates that this was a pre-existing earthwork, reused in the Roman and subsequent periods. The rampart at Lich Street was of broadly similar character to that at Severn Street, supporting Barker's interpretation that all of this rampart material should be associated with the small area of excavated Iron Age ditch. With the understanding of earthwork continuity gained at Severn Street, the later Roman ditch at Lich Street can be seen as a recut of the largely infilled Iron Age ditch. This suggests that an explanation for the much smaller first-century AD ditch at Lich Street is required, and it may be speculated that this could have formed part of a fort. Military activity during the first century AD has been generally assumed, though there is no evidence beyond a scatter of finds.

The earthwork bank and ditch which enclosed the 'central' part of Worcester was curvilinear rather than multangular in plan,

conforming with the interpretation that this was a reused prehistoric feature. Esmonde Cleary (1987, 157) commented on the unusually large size of Worcester's defences compared with those of other small towns (the ditch was up to 27m wide and 6m deep, with a rampart presumably of similar dimensions). Whether this has any implications for the status and function of the Worcester settlement is not at all clear. The area within the earthwork defences has seen little recent development and remains effectively unknown; there is still no indication of whether this area was otherwise special in function or character. The defensive earthwork must have been a major landscape feature when the first cathedral was built within it in AD 680, and probably persisted up to the end of the ninth century AD, when it appears to have been reused as the nucleus of the Mercian *burh* defences.

Outside the defended area was a broad zone of dispersed occupation (often termed the 'northern suburb', though this may over-emphasise the centrality of the defended area), with dwellings, agricultural and ancillary buildings, and metalled yard surfaces, all set within irregular ditched, fenced, or possibly hedged, enclosures (e.g. Deansway: Dalwood and Edwards 2004). The density of occupation varied greatly from area to area, and over time, though patterning is not yet easy to recognise.

In a number of areas where road alignments have been identified in excavation, there is evidence of plot layout and planning along the road frontages. This can be seen at Sidbury (Darlington and Evans 1992), and at The Hive. These locations are far apart, and it is unclear how characteristic this is of Worcester as a whole.



Figure 4.4 High-level view of a Romano-British enclosure at Bromwich Lane Tennis Club, St John's, Worcester. In the later Roman period the enclosure was abandoned and became a cemetery (see [Figure 4.9](#)) (Photograph by Adam Stanford. Copyright and by courtesy of AerialCam for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

Road alignments (two major roads and six other *straete* routes; Hooke 1980) can be seen approaching Worcester, but their courses are mostly lost where they enter the built-up area. Within the town, roads of Roman origin are only clearly demonstrable where they have been found by excavation; antiquarian (or indeed recent) observations of metallised surfaces may relate to yard surfaces rather than roads.

A major north–south road, about 170m west of the High Street, has been identified at a number of sites, and the High Street itself (and its northerly continuation as far as Barbourne Road) is thought to have had Roman origins. Between the two, three parallel lanes were excavated at Deansway. More recently, further roads have been recorded at Newport Street, at sites in The Butts, and at Lowesmoor (Dalwood 2011), and more can be anticipated. Several cemeteries or possible cemeteries are known from Worcester, although their relationships to main roads are not clear (see below).

Apart from the road system and defences, there is very little evidence for the infrastructure or civic amenities of the town. There was, however, a system of water supply, at least in one area: at Sidbury there was evidence of wooden water pipes following the

southern edge of the street in the late third century (Darlington and Evans 1992). Land reclamation seems to have been a characteristic of both the Severn and Frog Brook floodplains in the middle to later Roman period, with dumped iron slag a principal component. While in some cases this was associated with routeways, elsewhere the intention seems to have been to extend the dry land, perhaps as a direct response to increased flooding.

A wide variety of buildings and building types are known, though there is little detailed information on their character. Much is still conjectural, especially for the more 'Romanised' buildings, where most of the evidence is from redeposited building materials. Timber buildings at Sidbury included a circular building in the native tradition, and a large timber-framed 'strip building' of a type familiar from commercial contexts in Romano-British towns (Darlington and Evans 1992, 16, 23). The Deansway excavations produced fragmentary evidence for a number of small, post-built agricultural buildings or workshops, together with a foundation platform and rubble footing for two domestic timber-framed buildings (Dalwood and Edwards 2004). There is a growing body of evidence for fully Romanised buildings, whether of timber-framed or masonry construction. Two small evaluation trenches either side of the High Street found evidence of Roman buildings. At City Arcades (Griffin *et al.* 2004) a mortar floor was cut by robber trenches which had roof tiles and painted plaster in their fills. At the Guildhall (Napthan 2001), masonry building debris (hypocaust *pilae* tiles, worked limestone, mortared limestone rubble, ceramic roof tiles and box flue-tile) was associated with a robber trench. Excavation at The Hive produced evidence of several rectangular buildings fronting a metalled road, including a large late Roman aisled building (Bradley *et al.* forthcoming; [Figures 4.5](#) and [4.6](#)).

In 1829, curving sandstone foundations were found in the centre of Britannia Square (Allies 1852). Further remains have been observed on the south side of Britannia Square, where masonry building foundations have been recorded in watching briefs, along with a very small fragment of polychrome mosaic. Roman building debris, including *tesserae*, has been found in several other interventions in the surrounding area. The building found in 1829 has, in the past, been interpreted as a temple, but is more likely to have been part of a villa

complex, and the foundations could have been apsidal rather than circular.

Building materials from sites in Worcester which indicate the presence of Romanised buildings include flue-tiles, stone and clay roof tiles, bricks, flagstones, *tesserae*, window glass, painted wall plaster, and occasional stone architectural fragments. An important assemblage of building materials, dated to the end of the fourth century, came from a Roman well in The Butts (Napthan 2011). This included a fragment of a turned limestone column; much of the material showed signs of damage by fire.

Iron smelting slag is a common find from Roman Worcester, with the scale of dumped iron slag deposits implying a massive output, spread over more than two centuries. A commentary on the Worcester iron industry is given below. Although iron-working is by far the most visible of Roman Worcester's industries, other industrial activity was widespread. Non-domestic hearths are frequently found, though their functions cannot always be identified. At Deansway, there was evidence for glassworking in the third century, while at the small Conder Building site, evidence for copper and lead (copper alloy?) working was found (Sherlock and Pikes 2003). It has also recently been suggested that pottery manufacture may have occurred in the area around the Magistrates Court site (Jerry Evans, pers. comm.).

Some aspects of what was happening in the later Roman period (late third to late fourth or very early fifth century) are becoming clear, and there is enough evidence now to show that the built-up area contracted, but at different speeds in different parts of the settlement. As ever, the central area is the least known. Unoccupied areas are often marked by dark earth layers, with a variety of origins. Pottery finds suggest some occupation in the town in the late fourth (or perhaps early fifth) century, but otherwise there are very few finds for the period AD 400–680. Nevertheless, the persistence of features of known or possible Roman origin (the defences, the churches of St Helen and St Alban, and several road alignments) suggests a degree of continuity which may reflect a level of occupation in the town throughout this period. The dating of two rich burials from south of the Cathedral is unfortunately ambiguous, though they may well have predated the foundation of the see in AD 680 (Barker *et al.* 1974; Bassett 1989).

The Deansway excavation, and Baker and Holt's research into the origins and development of the medieval city (Baker and Holt 2004), set an agenda for research into Roman Worcester and the immediately preceding and following periods, which has informed more recent work. The results of recent extensive excavation in the northern part of the town (in total, about 1ha) now provide an opportunity to develop the research agenda, particularly in understanding the spatial patterning of land use, occupation and transport routes, and changes through time.

Droitwich

Droitwich is usually equated with the site of *Salinae* mentioned in the Ravenna Cosmography (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 211). Major excavations include Old Bowling Green, Friar Street, Upwich Pit, Dodderhill, Bays Meadow, and Hanbury Street (Hughes and Hunt 1992; Woodiwiss 1992; Hurst 1997; McAvoy 2006; Barfield 2006; Hughes 2006).

The salt production activity evident in the later Iron Age continued into the Roman period (Woodiwiss 1992), but none of the brine-processing features associated with this can yet be proven to have been operating much into the second century AD. Major works carried out at the brine springs in this same period suggest that the related extraction of brine was a continuing priority, though it is also far from clear that brine extraction from this source continued after the second century AD.

The most striking aspect of Roman Droitwich is the foundation of a villa at Bays Meadow, on the north side of the settlement area, in the mid-second century (Barfield 2006). This site is remarkable in the county as it exhibits all the trappings of a highly Romanised life-style, presumably reflecting the cultural affinities of the occupants (Figure 4.7). The site is presently explained in terms of the likely fate of the brine/salt resource; it would have been swept up into the hands of the emperor and then worked either by an imperial procurator or a civilian franchisee. In that case the villa is explicable as the residence of a 'salt magnate'. The eventual destruction of the main villa building was followed by the construction of a new (late third-/fourth-century) aisled hall, which was probably in appearance more in keeping with local building styles. The large number of later Roman coins (over

600) may also indicate a market function for the site in this later period.

Outside the villa complex, which was eventually marked by its own defences, life in Roman Droitwich is much more difficult to fathom. A series of wooden barrels, split along their lengths and set in the ground lengthwise, might have been tanks for the processing of brine or some other process such as pickling in brine, but there was no conclusive evidence. Traces of buildings and a trackway (Woodiwiss 1992) suggest some sort of activity, but much larger areas clearly need to be explored before any understanding can be achieved.

Villas

It is proposed here to use a recognisable ground-plan indicating a classic Roman-style building, especially the ‘winged corridor house’, as the chief signifier of villa status, regardless of the economic basis for their display of Roman-style culture (see Percival 1976, 13–5 and Dark and Dark 1997 for discussion of the meaning of the term ‘villa’ and its associations in Roman Britain).

Worcestershire, like neighbouring Warwickshire, has far fewer villas than are found on the Cotswolds to the south. Nevertheless, a small number of villas are known from the two counties, mostly on gravel terraces to the south of the Avon (Booth, this volume). In the Severn Valley in Gloucestershire, villa locations display a preference for the islands of sand and gravel that occur within the predominant geology of Lias clays (Holbrook 2004). In Worcestershire there are only two unequivocal villas, based on the above definition.

The chief example is at Bays Meadow, Droitwich (Barfield 2006), where there are many elements of the villa repertoire present (the building itself, and the accompanying impressive furniture, plentiful and sometimes rich finds), mainly explicable in the context of the adjacent brine/salt resource; this, therefore, is a villa based on industrial production and trade, and associated with the imperial salt monopoly. The nature and status of the nearby site at Stonebridge Cross (Miller *et al.* 2004) is far less clear, but may represent a secondary agricultural centre linked to the villa complex. The replacement building at Bays Meadow, after the main villa building was burnt down in the late third century, was an aisled timber building, implying that ‘villa status’ had ceased, based on the

definition above; however, status may still be conveyed not only in the scale of the building, but also in the composition of the finds assemblage – in this case the abundant fine glassware in use. Clearly status can, therefore, be distinguished in different ways according to changing circumstances, and the criteria should be revised accordingly based on those sites where the most detailed sequence of development is established.

The Bays Meadow villa was associated with an exceptional finds assemblage, including an intaglio ring which had probably been issued as part of the process of assigning the Droitwich salt rights. The range of personal ornaments indicated an affluent female presence which was compatible with its possible official status. Overall, the range of finds indicated a site occupied by an official who was able to import into the region a style and standard of living more often found in a Roman town such as Cirencester.

A second unequivocal villa has recently been excavated at Perrins Farm, Childswickham, occupying an isolated spread of gravel and sand (Patrick and Hurst 2004). This site was smaller than the final form of the Bays Meadow villa at its demise in the later third century, and its origins seemed to lie in the third to fourth century, when it was built over infilled enclosure ditches. Its history was, therefore, more in tune with the wider trend towards villa construction in the later Roman period.

A third probable villa site has been identified at Bredon's Norton, where excavation along a narrow pipeline transects revealed an extensive series of Roman-period settlement enclosures. Later Roman activity at the site was focused on the remains of a substantial masonry building near the southern boundary of the settlement area. A sunken-floored room, which contained a small circular stone-lined cistern set into a stone-flagged floor, supports the interpretation of the structure as a bath-house. Allied with the recovery of numerous roof tiles and painted wall plaster from the site, this suggests the structure probably formed part of a villa complex, the main part of which lay outside the investigated area (Allen *et al.* 2016).

The possible villa at Britannia Square, Worcester is discussed above. Although the site has a number of villa characteristics, there is as yet insufficient evidence of plan for it to be confidently identified.

Buildings constructed using 'Roman-style' materials are known

from other sites. One such site is Aston Mill Farm, Kemerton (Dinn and Evans 1990, 8), although the concentration of Roman building materials noted here was in an area which was destroyed by quarrying without any record being made. The character of these buildings is still unknown and they may just represent a trend towards building in a Romanised fashion rather than the sites of villas, which have been defined for the purposes of this section as buildings in a particular style as well as executed in the new Roman materials.

Farmsteads, rural settlements and settlement patterns

Although Romano-British rural settlements are common in Worcestershire, and there has been a rapid increase in intrusive fieldwork in recent years, the number of extensively excavated sites is still rather small. The intensity of rural occupation of the Avon valley in this period was first appreciated in the 1960s (Webster and Hobley 1964, 11), and subsequently the river valleys have been the focus for research. However, some evidence for rural settlement in the rest of Worcestershire is also available. The range of archaeological evidence for rural settlements includes extensive cropmark evidence, a small but growing number of excavations, and systematic fieldwalking surveys of two areas of the county.



Figure 4.5 Romano-British aisled building under excavation at The Hive site, Worcester, 2008. The red-clay foundations of the walls show clearly, along with the red-clay pads for the posts, one of which has been half-sectioned (Montage of photographs taken by R. White)



Figure 4.6 High-level view of The Hive site showing the excavated aisled building in its context (Photograph by Adam Stanford. Copyright and by courtesy of AerialCam for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

South Worcestershire

Since the 1970s, gravel extraction has led to a focus on the archaeological resource of the river valleys, especially in south Worcestershire along the Severn and Avon and the Carrant Brook (a tributary of the Avon). Romano-British rural settlement has been reviewed as part of the assessment of the potential impact of future mineral extraction (Morton and Holbrook 2007), while another project reviewed finds from previous fieldwork held in museum collections (Evans *et al.* 2008).

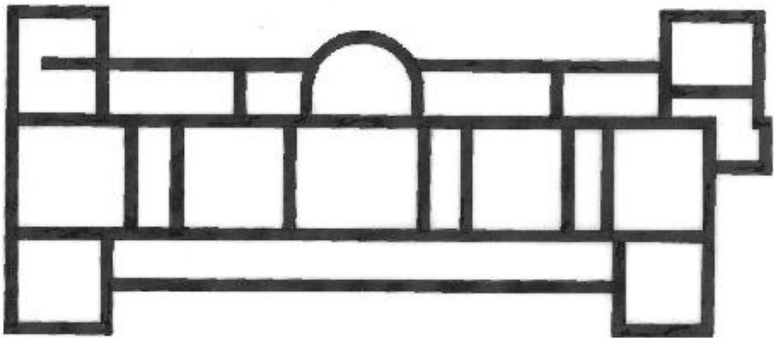
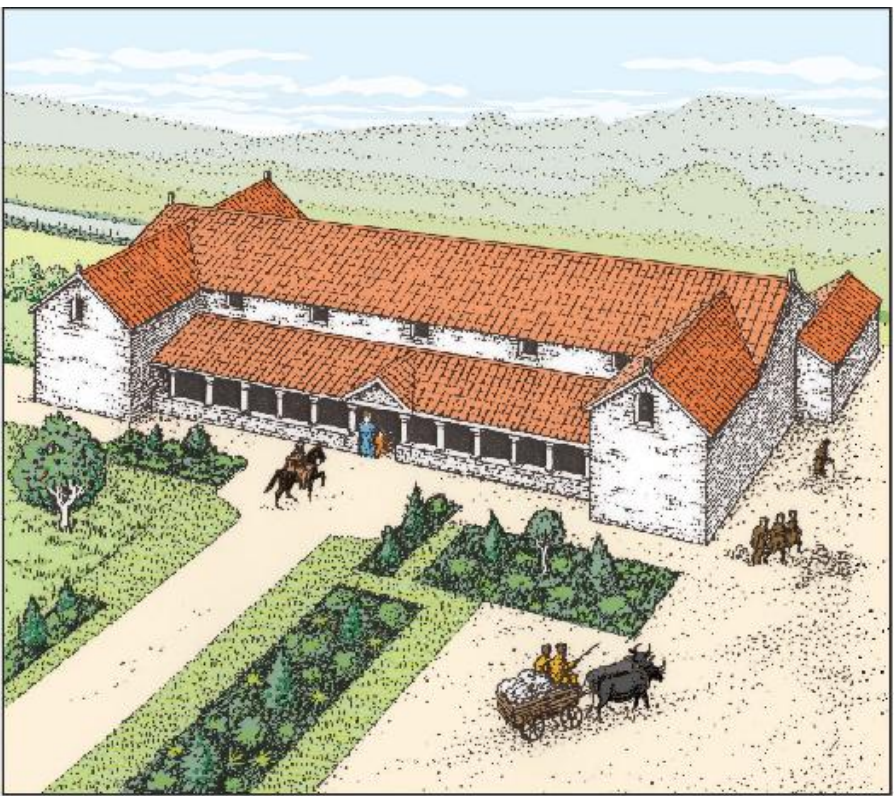


Figure 4.7 Plan and reconstruction of the Bays Meadow Villa, Droitwich (Copyright and by courtesy of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

In the valleys of the Avon and Carrant Brook cropmarks reveal extensive articulated landscapes covering many hectares composed of settlement enclosures, paddocks, trackways and field systems, which are likely for the most part to represent late prehistoric and Roman

period activity. A series of assessments undertaken in conjunction with agri-environment schemes (Conservation of Scheduled Monuments in Cultivation, enhanced methodology: COSMIC+) have focused on over 50 of these cropmark sites. These have incorporated geophysical survey and limited evaluation trenching and have confirmed the predominantly late Iron Age and Roman date of these sites, as well as long-lived and complex patterns of occupation (Figure 4.8). Notably, several have proved to include stone-founded buildings, indicative of a more widespread use of this construction technique than might have been expected (Darren Miller, pers. comm.). More extensive investigation has been limited but in the Carrant Brook valley, Aston Mill Farm, Kemerton (Dinn and Evans 1990), another site to the south-west of the village of Kemerton (Bellamy 2001), and the large site at Beckford (Wills forthcoming) are the best-explored sites, the latter including a rare example of a small rural cemetery. South of the Carrant Brook, in areas of predominantly lias clay and Mercian Mudstone, settlement sites correlate with areas of slightly higher elevation and very localised deposits of gravel (Coleman *et al.* 2006, 4).

In the Avon valley a number of sites have been investigated. Some excavated sites are fairly small (<1 ha), and consist of roundhouses with associated enclosures, such as Leylandii House Farm, Norton and Lenchwick (Jackson *et al.* 1996b). A series of settlement enclosures at Wyre Piddle, Pinvin, Upper Moor and Throckmorton have been the subject of recent fieldwork (Griffin *et al.* 2005; Vaughan 2005; R Jackson, pers. comm.). Many of these have middle or late Iron Age predecessors and, although the settlement foci appear to have shifted within the complexes, there is continuity of some boundaries and field systems. Settlement sites are clearly extensive in the Avon valley, and there is clear (but limited) evidence of at least one settlement beneath the historic core of Evesham (Lockett and Griffin 2006).

In the Severn Valley, a farmstead has been examined at Saxon's Lode Farm, Ripple. Here, activity is attested solely by pits during the late Iron Age to early Roman period, but in the second century a rectilinear ditched enclosure (<1 ha) was constructed which appears to have contained at least one rectangular building. The enclosure had been abandoned by the mid-third century (Barber and Watts 2008). This site was fully excavated, and produced evidence for a mixed

farming economy; it may be typical of rural settlement sites in south-east Worcestershire.

Evaluation at Clifton Quarry (Severn Stoke) recorded extensive surface scatters of late Iron Age and Roman material, including substantial quantities of iron slag. Subsequent geophysical survey showed these to be associated with a complex series of enclosures and other features. This site appears to be a large rural settlement on the banks of the Severn, possibly with a degree of specialisation in iron production, which exploited the river for transportation both of raw materials and finished products (Miller *et al.* 2001). Within 2 km of Worcester, further settlement sites have been excavated at Bath Road and in St John's, both originating in the Iron Age (Rogers 2014a; 2014b; Wainwright 2014a; 2014c). The site at St John's included a rectangular enclosure occupied for a brief period c. AD 50, and was interpreted as a possible trading site, based on the unusual artefact assemblage. North of Worcester there is a concentration of cropmark enclosures in the Grimley and Holt area to the west of the river (Edwards 1997). Rather than being part of an extensive cropmark landscape like that represented in the Avon and Carrant Brook valleys, the sites represented appear to be discrete enclosures. Evaluation and subsequent excavation has indicated successive phases of middle and late Iron Age to Roman activity in five discrete enclosures (Deeks 2004; Webster 2017). Evidence of domestic occupation was only present within two of the enclosures and it seems likely that the others functioned as large stock-holding areas which were perhaps paired with those containing domestic occupation.

Central and North Worcestershire

Archaeological fieldwork and a number of research projects provide insight into the character of Romano-British rural settlement in areas outside the river valleys of the south-east of the county. This has indicated that the character of rural settlements on sandstone and on clay subsoils are very similar to the range of sites on the terraces of the River Severn. A site at Hindlip comprised a small group of rectangular enclosures (Wainwright 2014b). Other sites have seen much less extensive excavation, but their general character is similar, such as Linacres Farm, North Claines (Dalwood *et al.* 1998) and Hoarstone Farm, Kidderminster Foreign (Jackson *et al.* 1996). Many

sites probably had their origins in the Iron Age, such as Stoke Lane (Wychbold), which was occupied into the early Roman period (Jones and Evans 2006).

Two extensive fieldwalking programmes were undertaken in the 1990s to examine medieval landscapes and their origins (Dyer 1991, 5, 15–8; Dyer 1990), together with aerial photographic survey. The Roman settlement pattern in Hanbury parish, east of Droitwich, appeared to consist of small enclosures, detected as either cropmarks or limited spreads of pottery, which were widespread across the parish and accompanied by manuring scatters (Dyer 1991, 16–7, fig 4). The overall impression was of widespread settlement and extensive cultivation, somewhat of a contrast to later landuse patterns. The character of the settlement and farming pattern at Hanbury probably relates to its proximity to Droitwich. In the parish of Pendock, in south-west Worcestershire, a pattern of extensive settlement was also detected, with small settlements (< 0.5 ha.) and almost ubiquitous evidence for Roman manuring scatters (Dyer 1990, 102–3, fig 2). The evidence for settlement and farming of these two areas, away from the river valleys, is a widespread scatter of small farmsteads in the form of rectangular enclosures, associated with arable cultivation.

Buildings on rural settlements

Few building plans are known from rural settlements. Traces of roundhouses have been recorded occasionally, as at Leylandii House Farm, Norton and Lenchwick (second to mid-third century: Jackson *et al.* 1996) but generally structures are very difficult to detect. At Saxon's Lode Farm a drip gully appears to have defined a rectangular building but no structural evidence could be detected (Barber and Watts 2008). Shallow stone-packed pits at Dunley Road, Areley Kings may have provided padstone foundations for a substantial aisled building (Dinn and Hemingway 1992), whilst at many sites postholes and occasionally beam slots provide fragmentary evidence for small timber structures. The majority of buildings were probably made of cob or turf, or were timber-framed with sill-beams; any of these would leave little archaeological trace. Small areas of stone surface recorded at Furzen Farm (unpublished), Throckmorton Airfield (Griffin *et al.* 2005), and Norton-juxta-Kempsey (Jackson *et al.* 1995) might represent the internal floors of such structures, as has been suggested

for similar evidence in Warwickshire (Stuart Palmer, pers. comm.). This interpretation arises partly due to the relatively insubstantial nature of the surfaces, which suggests that they would not have been suited to use as external yards. Further, large quantities of domestic material are present both on the surfaces and in associated drainage gullies and ditches, while occasional postholes may represent doorposts or roof supports. At Throckmorton, roof tile and numerous nails were scattered across an area of stone surface suggesting that it either supported a building or had one fronting onto it (Griffin *et al.* 2005). Lastly, the use of stone has recently proved to be more common than had been previously suspected at sites located on and around Bredon Hill and it is evident that here, where stone was readily available, it was utilised in the construction of buildings or at least their foundations (Darren Miller, pers. comm.; see [Figure 4.8](#)).

Farming systems and settlement forms

The pattern described here is of different settlement forms prevailing in different parts of Worcestershire, reflecting different farming regimes. This has wider implications, since the cultural values of pastoral communities may be very different from those of arable farmers (Roger White, pers. comm.). In pastoral communities, wealth was based on cattle ownership, and many aspects of cultural exchange and economy were orientated around cattle, as prevailed in north Holland in the later Iron Age and Roman periods (Roymans 1996), or in Ireland in the Roman Iron Age (Wickham 2005, 354–64). The contrast with arable farming communities would be marked, as arable farming would have been embedded in the market economy. Differences between pastoral and arable farming may be detectable in the archaeological record, but part of that pattern is likely to be different degrees of archaeological visibility. This was demonstrated clearly by the Wroxeter Hinterland Survey, where outside the immediate environs of the city, only very small quantities of Roman pottery were recovered from fieldwalking across wide areas of the landscape (Gaffney and White 2007). Differences in settlement form, material culture and farming regime are likely to reflect deeply embedded social structures that developed in later prehistory (Roger White, pers. comm.).

Changes in rural settlement pattern

Some chronological patterns are now beginning to emerge which suggest periods of considerable change in the rural landscape. Many settlement areas occupied during the late Iron Age and early Roman period appear to have been abandoned in the early to mid-second century. At the same time, many new settlement sites were established suggesting that this was a period of settlement dislocation and re-ordering of the landscape rather than abandonment (Griffin *et al.* 2005). The newly established settlements display an apparent peak in prosperity, extent and density in the late second through to the mid-third century, but most were abandoned by the mid-fourth century. For example, excavation of four settlement sites in the Carrant Brook valley revealed similar settlement chronologies, with occupation dating to the second to third century followed by apparent abandonment before the early fourth century (Hancocks *et al.* 2006, 92). This later phase of abandonment coincides with apparent settlement shrinkage at Droitwich and Worcester and, unlike in the second century, there is no obvious pattern of replacement. This is a very significant event, and the full implications cannot yet be assessed. There is evidence that woodland regeneration had occurred in some areas of Worcestershire by the early medieval period, and this may imply depopulation in these areas during the (later) Roman period, perhaps the fourth century. However, there is also evidence from other areas of the county, and from paleoenvironmental evidence, that indicates continued management of the Roman farming landscape throughout the early medieval period, which can be taken to imply continued occupation in the third to fourth century, but with settlement on new sites (Rippon *et al.* 2015). The question of where the rural population went remains an open one, and Roger White (pers. comm.) has suggested two possibilities: a shift to new settlement sites that remained occupied into the medieval period and later (i.e. fourth-century settlements lie beneath modern villages), or a shift into towns to avoid heavy taxation of the rural population, but the latter idea is contradicted by the settlement shrinkage seen at Droitwich and Worcester (described above), so a shift to sites occupied by later villages is more likely. The evidence is too slight at present to offer certain interpretations.

Burial and religion

Rural settlement sites in Worcestershire have produced few burials, and preservation conditions are often poor. There are small groups of burials of late Iron Age or early Roman and later Roman date from Beckford (Wills forthcoming). Inhumation burials were recorded in peripheral areas of two rural settlement sites investigated on the Wyre Piddle bypass at Wyre Piddle and Pinvin (Robin Jackson, pers. comm.), whilst at a nearby site at Upper Moor two inhumations occupied a small sub-division of a larger settlement enclosure (Vaughan 2005). Isolated cremations have also been found on rural settlement sites, as at Strensham (Jackson *et al.* 1996b) and Hindlip (Wainwright 2014b).



Figure 4.8 Late Roman wall revealed by trial trenching during the COSMIC+ survey of Bredon Hill (Copyright and by courtesy of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

A number of cemeteries are known from Worcester (Worcester City Council 2007, 32–3). That on the south side of the town, around the castle site and Mill Street, may have been quite extensive, and both inhumations (at least 15 individuals) and cremations in pots have been found in this area. The presence of a complete Roman glass jug from part-way up the castle motte (found during the demolition of the motte in the early nineteenth century) has led to the suggestion that

there may have been a Roman barrow here. A late Roman inhumation cemetery (14 individuals), set within a ditched enclosure, was excavated at Deansway, well within the urban settlement (Dalwood and Edwards 2004). More recently, a small late Roman to early post-Roman cemetery has been excavated on the site of the earlier Roman enclosure at Bromwich Lane Tennis Club, St John's (Wainwright 2014a; 2014c; [Figure 4.9](#)). Both of these cemeteries were linear in plan and associated with earlier boundary features. A burial and other bone finds from New Street have also been proposed as a possible cemetery, close to the projected line of the road to Droitwich. Most if not all of these sites are late (fourth century) in date. Single burials have been widely recorded within the town, including infant inhumations and cremations.

Inhumation burials have typically produced evidence of coffin nails (Beckford), hobnails from shoes (Beckford; St John's, Worcester; Deansway, Worcester) and the rite of decapitation (Beckford; St John's; Deansway).

Ceramics provide only limited evidence for religious or funerary activity in the county. Face pots are thought to have religious associations, the majority of British examples coming from ritual deposits. They are thought to represent either local or familiar protective deities, or perhaps have associations with the Celtic smith god and his Roman counterpart, Vulcan (Braithwaite 2007). Only a handful of face pots are known in Severn Valley ware (Gillian Braithwaite, pers. comm.). Interestingly, given this association with the smith god, one is from a major Roman iron-working centre at *Ariconium*, in neighbouring Herefordshire (Jackson 2012). To date, only four examples are known from Worcestershire, three of which are from Worcester. The concentration in Worcester, though obviously based on a very small sample, may be significant, given this association with iron working elsewhere (Braithwaite 2007, 279). One face pot, a late Roman vessel, was recovered from Blackfriars (unpublished). Two other vessels came from excavations at The Hive (Evans forthcoming a). Though not from features directly associated with iron working, they are from pits that contained significant quantities of slag and furnace lining. The pits dated to the fourth century, but the face pots, and the associated iron working debris, could be residual. The fourth example, a crudely made face-pot, of

which only the upper half survives, came from excavations undertaken on Bredon Hill between 1912 and 1944 (Evans *et al.* 2008). Unfortunately the context of this is not recorded, but it is assumed to have come from a large jar. Excavations at the Magistrates Court, Worcester produced a possible stone altar fragment and a pipeclay Venus figurine (Boucher forthcoming). Tazze, thought to have been used as incense burners, may also have had ritual uses; one was found at 14/24 The Butts, Worcester (Evans 2011, fig. 5.17). Fieldwork at Inkberrow produced a fragment from a lamp chimney, similar to the example illustrated from the Gloucester Berkeley Street kiln (Timby 1991, fig. 5). These are not common finds, and it is thought that they may also have some religious or votive function. A pottery sherd from Old Bowling Green, Droitwich was inscribed with 'VASCIILLA', possibly indicating the vessel was used as a funerary urn, although other interpretations are also suggested (Hassall 1992). However, the most spectacular find related to burial is the burnt bone veneer from Bays Meadow villa, thought to be from a third-century funeral bier, which has parallels at Brougham, Birdoswald and Usk (Cool 2006a).



Figure 4.9 Late Roman or early post-Roman burial (1442) at Bromwich Lane Tennis Club, St John's, Worcester (Copyright and by courtesy of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

In Worcester, the siting of the churches of St Helen and St Alban on the rear of the Roman rampart has been suggested as significant, and either or both could have been founded on Roman religious sites (either Christian or non-Christian). A fourth-century 'chi-rho device' was found in the 1960s, probably on the Lychgate development site, though the provenance is not definite. The identification of the Roman building at Britannia Square, Worcester, as a temple is now generally discounted.

A study of data recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme from the county shows most sites to have 'rural' character assemblages

(Brindle 2014a, b). Brindle notes that, on current evidence, there are no Worcestershire sites that lend themselves easily to suggestions of religious or ritual activity, as there have been in some other regions (e.g. Wiltshire and Northamptonshire). It is worth noting, however, that Inkberrow, mentioned above, has three distinct concentrations of finds represented by PAS data. The largest of these, from the same site as the lamp chimney described above, has 67 records of PAS material, indicating a significant level of activity. One of the finds, an enamelled plate brooch depicting a hippocamp, is a rare type in Britain (only four examples currently recorded on the PAS database) but is found more commonly on the continent. While there is insufficient evidence at the time of writing to suggest the function of this site, it has an unusual character.

Production

Production, fuel supply and transport networks

The West Midlands have been characterised as a zone where the intensive exploitation of natural resources was particularly important in the Roman period (Esmonde Cleary 2011). It has been suggested that mineral and natural resources from the West Midlands were in demand by the army in the military zones to the west and the north of the province, in order to feed, clothe and equip the troops.

Several large-scale industries operated in Roman Worcestershire: pottery in the Malvern Link area; iron production in Worcester (and possibly elsewhere); and salt at Droitwich. Each of these major industries will have been supported by specialised smaller suppliers. Taken together these indicate a particularly strong industrial base to the local economy, and a great stimulus to local business and trade. The location of salt production at Droitwich is dictated by the availability of brine. More complex factors influenced the location of the other two industries.

Suitable clays for pottery production are available across the Severn Valley. The Malvern Link kilns are on the periphery of the Dobunnian *civitas*. This is thought to have been an influencing factor in the location of other pottery industries (Millett 1990, 167). The siting of kilns at Malvern may also have provided easy access to trade routes by road through Kenchester, to the west, and to the east via Worcester and the River Severn (Evans *et al.* 2000, 74). Perhaps the most

environmentally significant factor for all these industries would have been the attendant demand for fuel. The preparation and supply of firewood and charcoal must have been a major occupation given the types of industries involved, and it is likely that this led to woodland clearances, the extent of any coppicing to counteract the depletion of woodland being, as yet, unknown locally in the Roman period. The location of an iron-smelting industry at Worcester may well have balanced this need for fuel with proximity to the river, which would have provided access to the ores and a distribution network for the finished products. All these industries probably had interlinking distribution networks, tied in perhaps with the transport of agricultural products, and possibly linked to ancient droveways.

Transport services, either bringing in fuel or exporting the products, would have required large numbers of oxen or horses, and presumably other services such as cart building would also have flourished locally. The draught animals would, in turn, have stimulated a demand for large amounts of animal fodder, and this would have forged a strong link with the surrounding farmland.

Iron working

Iron working played a crucial part in the economy of the small town at Worcester, and the evidence has been considered in detail (Jackson 2004). Iron smelting and smithing occurred at other sites along the Severn. Significant quantities of smithing slag have been recovered from rural sites such as Norton-juxta-Kempsey (Jackson *et al.* 1996, 36–53), Linacres Farm, North Claines (Dalwood *et al.* 1998), Clifton Quarry, Kempsey (Miller *et al.* 2001), and Bath Road and St John's, both close to the town at Worcester (Rogers 2014a; 2014b; Wainwright 2014a; 2014c). These iron-working sites form part of a series that are known on the banks of the Severn from Cardiff to Worcester. It is a vexed question whether all these sites utilised ore from the Forest of Dean. Metallurgical analysis of slags from Worcester was not able to demonstrate this point conclusively, and it is conceivable that the ore derived from now totally exhausted outcrops of a narrow band of iron-bearing rock known as the Worcester Graben that ran from Kidderminster southwards towards Gloucester (McDonnell and Swiss 2004, 376–8). Some support for an origin outside of the Forest of Dean for the ore smelted in Worcester is

suggested by the observation that if Dean ore was transported up the Severn, it is surprising that no evidence of extensive iron-making has come from either the suburbs of Gloucester or the settlement at Tewkesbury. Analyses of artefacts from Beckford also demonstrated an increasing use of non-Dean phosphoritic ores (Salter 2000, 56).

Evidence for smithing, in the form of slag and hammerscale, has been found on a number of sites. Primary smithing, refining the bloom, would most likely have taken place at smelting sites (Bayley *et al.* 2001, 13) such as Worcester. Iron-working sites, such as Bath Road, Worcester (Rogers 2014a; 2014b), which produce very little evidence of smelting, are therefore more likely to have been engaged in secondary smithing: producing, repairing and recycling artefacts. There is no evidence, as yet, for large-scale production of any particular types of objects. Most smithing, particularly on rural sites, presumably relates to small-scale production to meet everyday needs. Given the large amounts of iron processed in the Worcester area it is likely that this is the source of much of the iron used. However, further data and analysis are clearly required since some of the rural sites noted above (notably those at Norton-juxta-Kempsey and Clifton Quarry) have produced quantities of slag considerably in excess of those to be expected for local production and smelting as well as smithing is indicated. This mirrors the pattern of a number of riverside settlements along the Severn Estuary, as at Hills Flats, Oldbury Flats and Rumney Great Wharf (Allen and Fulford 1987, 278). One suggestion is that regional iron production could have been based around small-scale enterprises of which there were concentrations in 'small towns' like Worcester and *Ariconium* but which were also present on some rural settlement sites with good transport links via rivers.

Pottery production

The significance of pottery to regional studies of this period has been described in detail elsewhere (Evans, this volume). A number of kiln sites, based on the Triassic clays and associated with Severn Valley ware production, are known or suspected at the north-east end of the Malvern Hills, in the vicinity of Malvern Link (Evans *et al.* 2000, table 12). The Malvern pottery industry was well established as a significant regional supplier by the middle Iron Age, though the origins of the

industry are in fact earlier than this. The Iron Age and Roman 'Malvernian' wares have very diagnostic inclusions, and have contributed to a number of important studies of trade (Peacock 1967; Hodder 1974). The Roman Malvernian wares, including copies of Black Burnished ware forms, reflect a continuation of pottery styles from the Iron Age into the Roman period. The Severn Valley wares (Webster 1976) are more difficult to source, though more detailed fabric analysis (e.g. at *Ariconium*; Willis 2012) and various scientific analyses have demonstrated the potential to refine identifications (C. J. Evans 2004a). The main products of the Malvern kilns are utilitarian jars, bowls and tankards; there is no real evidence for the specialist production of mortaria or colour-coated table wares. Some of the forms have their origins in Late Iron Age Belgic traditions, while some are new 'Romanised' forms. Severn Valley ware is found across a large area of central western England and also on the northern frontier (Webster 1977), the latter potentially including products of the Malvern kilns. This raises questions about the role of Malvern's pottery industry, and the other industries summarised above, in the wider trade network of Roman Britain.

Development of a site at Newland Hopfields, Malvern Link in the 1990s provided the first opportunity to excavate a Severn Valley ware production site and quantify in detail the products (Evans *et al.* 2000). The pottery from this site was dated to the mid- to late second to early third century. Evidence from the other kiln sites demonstrates that potters were active in the Malvern area from the late first or early second century, to the fourth century (Peacock 1967). Little is known about the potters and how they were organised, and whether the difference in contemporary production styles (handmade Malvernian and wheelmade Severn Valley ware) was reflected in other ways. It is likely that there are many more kiln sites to be located, at Malvern and elsewhere. Sites across the county have occasionally produced misfired sherds that could indicate a local kiln in their vicinity.

The dating of forms by their occurrence in well-stratified deposits is another key element in understanding a pottery industry. Excavations across the county, particularly in Worcester, continue to enhance the dating evidence. The Roman assemblage from Beckford (Wills forthcoming) provides a sequence of pottery use from the middle Iron Age through to the late Roman period. Excavations

around Wyre Piddle have provided a sequence of assemblages dating from the early Roman period at George Lane to a fourth-century assemblage at Upper Moor (Griffin forthcoming a). Excavations at sites in The Butts and Castle Street in Worcester (Evans 2011; Evans *et al.* 2014; Evans forthcoming a; Jerry Evans forthcoming) and Bays Meadow villa, Droitwich (Barfield 2006) provide substantial assemblages of later Roman pottery.

Ceramic ovens and baking plates

A more unusual product of the Malvern pottery industry is the oven material; pre-formed ceramic ovens and baking plates. Occasional fragments of these have been found over the years on a number of sites across the county (Darlington and Evans 1992, 69; Hurst and Woodiwiss 1992; Griffin 2010; Griffin 2012; Griffin and Hurst 2016; Griffin 2017), usually in late third- to fourth-century deposits. Excavations at The Hive in Worcester produced a substantial quantity of this material (1103 fragments, weighing 110.3kg), some of which was *in situ* (Figure 4.10), allowing the form of these ovens and baking plates to be reconstructed (Evans forthcoming b). These finds are of national significance: Roman clay ovens are rare in Britain, partly perhaps because remains are not being recognised (Darling 2012). No exact parallels for these ovens are known, from Britain or the continent. Related types were produced in north Wales and have been found in Chester (Darling 2012, fig 2.10, 11; Alison Heke, pers. comm.), but these are sufficiently different to suggest they would not have been used in the same way. Malvernian oven plates and occasional superstructure fragments have been recorded on sites in north Gloucestershire, but not from the central and southern Cotswolds (Ed McSloy, pers. comm.). They are less common in Herefordshire. Similar oven plates have been recorded on sites elsewhere in the West Midlands, particularly Warwickshire, though not made in the Malvernian fabric so presumably from a different source (J Evans 2011).

Salt production

The brine springs at Droitwich, which had been exploited since the early Iron Age, continued to be utilised for salt production in the early Roman period. By the mid-second century there are signs that the salt industry was under official supervision (Barfield 2006, 239),

particularly evidenced by the presence of a ring bestowed to officials in imperial service (Henig 2006, 207). With the disappearance of briquetage (ceramic salt containers) in the early Roman period, the tracking of the industry becomes literally less clear as the presence of salt can no longer be seen at consumer sites, and this seems to have been accompanied both by changing production methods and probably by relocation, as the former production area is covered with features more suggestive of ordinary civilian activity in a small settlement. However, the unusual use of wooden barrels seems to hint that the brine or salt may, by the later Roman period, have been used for food processing (preservation by brining).

Other craft production

A range of other crafts is apparent from site assemblages across the county, though it is clear that there is a desperate need for quantified synthesis of the existing data. No obvious production sites for other crafts have been identified. This must partly reflect the nature of many crafts: small-scale activities taking place on a range of rural and urban sites. It is also likely that the relatively small extent of excavated areas at many sites means that lesser industries have yet to reveal themselves.

A rural tile production site has been identified at Leigh Sinton, near Malvern, in the same general area as the pottery kilns (Waters 1963). Roman brick and tile is found on many sites across the county, but the infrastructure of production is not understood. An XRF analysis undertaken by Nigel Cassidy of Keele University included ceramic building material and Severn Valley ware pottery from the county. While the full results of this are not yet published, an initial review of the data showed that products from different sources could be discriminated (Evans 2004a). The study included building material from the Newland Hopfield kiln site in Malvern, the Magistrates Court, Worcester (Boucher forthcoming), and Sidbury, Worcester (Darlington and Evans 1992), as well as material from the Roman tilery at St Oswald's, Gloucester. The analysis suggested that while much of the Magistrates Court tile often clustered with the Newland Hopfield samples, the Sidbury tile distributions overlapped with both Malvern and Gloucester, reflecting a range of possible sources. This study needs to be expanded, and to include more material from well-

dated contexts so that chronological patterns in supply can be assessed. The ceramic building material from Bays Meadow villa (Droitwich) is thought to have been produced specifically for the villa construction (Barfield 2006, 166). Given the evidence for other building work on site, it is likely to have been made in the vicinity of the villa. Unfortunately no fabric descriptions are published for this material. This assemblage would make a useful addition to any future studies.

Excavations at Deansway (Worcester) provided evidence for small-scale glass and copper working, in the form of crucible fragments, furnace lining, molten glass and glass debris (Cool and Jackson 2004; Taylor 2004). Further evidence for non-ferrous metal working, and possibly glass working, comes from Sidbury (Worcester), which produced a crucible, a fragment of mould, and some possible waste from glass and lead working (Darlington and Evans 1992, 68–9, 82, 84). More unusually, Bays Meadow villa (Droitwich) produced evidence for the extraction of silver from base silver metal by the lead cupellation process, possibly associated with coin manufacture (Lloyd-Morgan and Barfield 2006, 203). A small hoard found at Hindlip (16 silver coins, a lump of molten silver and a lump of molten gold; Bolton 2010) is thought to have been deposited by a jeweller.

Animal bone would have been a cheap and readily accessible raw material, yet relatively little evidence for bone working has yet been recovered from Worcestershire. Bays Meadow villa (Droitwich) produced a small assemblage of partially worked bone (Lloyd-Morgan 2006, 214), along with a number of bone artefacts. The occurrence of bone artefacts varies from site to site. A sizeable assemblage of bone artefacts was recovered from this site, although the collection was considered notable for the narrow range of artefact types (Lloyd-Morgan 2006, 211). Relatively few worked bone objects were recovered from Roman contexts at Sidbury or Deansway, Worcester (Darlington and Evans 1992; Greep 2004), although The Hive excavations have produced a number of bone artefacts. The relative paucity of bone objects on some sites might imply that bone working was not being practised locally, perhaps pointing to some regional nuance in style, or perhaps reflects the poor survival of animal bone on many sites. Such variations need to be quantified more fully.

The stone roofing tiles used in the aisled building at Bays Meadow

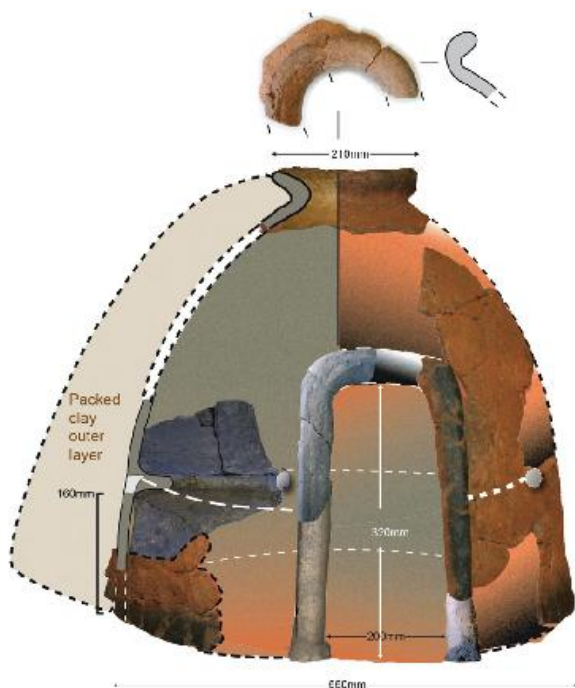
villa (Droitwich) were predominantly Old Red Sandstone, for which possible sources include the Welsh borders (Roe and Barfield 2006, 167) and Wellington Heath, near Ledbury, Herefordshire (Roe 2004, 463). These stone tiles, of the same material found at Kenchester and at sites in Worcester, appear to be from a specialist workshop: the tiles are carefully finished and come in three standard sizes (Roe and Barfield 2006, 168). Some other stone roofing tiles at Bays Meadow villa were produced using Lias, which outcrops across central Worcestershire, but this does not seem to reflect specialist production. They were poorly made, irregular in shape, and not of a standard size; they were probably used for repair.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 4.10 (a) Base of clay oven after excavation; (b) Foundation of clay oven after removal of oven floor; (c) Reconstruction of clay oven, showing the various component parts (Copyright and by courtesy of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)

The villa at Bays Meadow was probably built and decorated by specialist, non-local craftsmen, possibly from the Cotswold area (Barfield 2006, 239). The excavations revealed a limekiln (Barfield 2006, fig 61) and a *tesserae*-working area. The latter was associated with a hut structure, an association that is thought to be unique in Britain (Johnston 2006, 174).

There is very poor evidence for woodworking, textiles, or leather working across the county, due to the paucity of waterlogged deposits excavated. Many sites produce iron tools that could have been used for a variety of crafts. The data for these would need to be collated before making any comments on the possible occurrence of specific activities. Ceramic spindle whorls and loomweights are also fairly common finds across the county. The best organic remains come from the salt-working site at Droitwich (Crone 1992). As well as the brine tanks, barrels and various tools, all of which provide evidence for their working, the excavations produced two cutting blocks. Unfortunately the dating of these is uncertain. They were largely found in the debris dumped into the late Iron Age brine storage tanks that had gone out of use by about the early second century AD, and possibly some time before this, if these large features had taken some time to become fully infilled.

Finally, the distribution of various categories of personal ornament suggests regional styles and perhaps production sites, located somewhere near the centre of the distributions. For example, Polden Hill brooches, found at Worcester, Droitwich, and other sites across the county, are common in the south-west and midlands. Another example is the distribution of certain bracelet types, centred on Gloucestershire (Hilary Cool, pers. comm.). There is a need for a synthetic study of such types, to identify likely production areas and assess how their distribution relates to the civitates. This is too extensive a subject to tackle within the scope of this paper, and needs to be addressed at a regional rather than county level.

Agricultural production

There is evidence for a much greater degree of organisation of the

farming landscape than previously, with the processing and storage of goods on a larger scale on some settlements, particularly on villa estates (as is the case nationally). In Worcestershire, direct evidence for crop processing, crop storage and animal husbandry is widespread, although animal bones are often poorly preserved, and hence the level of detail from many sites on animal husbandry practices is low. Rich assemblages of charred plant remains have been recovered from farmsteads at Leylandii House Farm, Norton and Lenchwick (Jackson *et al.* 1996a), Norton-juxta-Kempsey (Jackson *et al.* 1995), Strensham (Jackson *et al.* 1996b), and Throckmorton Airfield (Head and Mann 2005), while large dumps of charred crop waste have also been found in a ditch along the Broadway Bypass (Hurst and Pearson 1997), and (of probable Roman date) in a peaty sediment at Beckford (Greig and Colledge 1988). All these sites are within the Cotswold/Avon zone described by Esmonde Cleary (2011), where many sites appear to be more Romanised. Those listed above show evidence of crop processing, in relatively large quantities. At Leylandii House Farm this was directly related to a corn drier. More sparse scatters of charred cereal crop waste have been found on settlements which would be considered to be outside this more Romanised zone, for example, in the Severn Valley north of Worcester along the Astley to Worcester Aqueduct (Dalwood *et al.* 1998), and at sites around Holt such as Top Barn Farm, Holt (Pearson 2004). The pattern is not clear-cut as there are some sparse scatters of charred cereal crop waste from sites within the Cotswold/Avon zone, such as in the Severn Valley south of Worcester at Ryall Quarry (Pearson 2008), and in the Avon valley along the Wyre Piddle Bypass, at nearby Upper Moor (Head 2005), and along the Wormington to Tirley pipeline (Coleman *et al.* 2006). Generally the large-scale processing of cereal crops is found within the Romanised zone, as would be expected, and within in an area that has culturally more in common with central and southern England, suggesting some continuity culturally.

Of potential interest is an area in the Severn Valley in south Worcestershire, which seems to have been an important arable producer during the prehistoric period. Evidence for large-scale storage of cereal crops here during the prehistoric period includes remarkably rich deposits of charred cereal grain in storage pits of late Iron Age date at Ryall Quarry (Pearson 2008) and numerous four-

poster granaries of late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date at Clifton Quarry (Andrew Mann, pers. comm.). As yet, however, there is only limited evidence for Roman settlement in this area, and there is no evidence for large-scale arable processing or storage. More evidence is needed to confirm whether land use in this area changes markedly from the Iron Age to Roman periods.

Although the number of sites for comparison is still small, the evidence for larger-scale crop processing appears to be on sites in the middle to the south of the county, and mostly within the Vale of Evesham and the valleys of the Avon and its tributaries around Bredon Hill. It may be significant that there are a number of confirmed and possible villas in this area, as well as the most extensive spreads of articulated enclosed landscapes of settlement enclosures and surrounding field systems in the county. The importance of topography, soils, culture and communication routes in the location of larger arable settlements are all significant issues to consider, and it is probably no coincidence that this part of the county has some of the best drained and most fertile soils.

Larger quantities of charred cereal crop remains are also found in, or on the fringes of, urban settlements, sometimes because they were collecting points for cereal products as well as other goods, and also because some areas of towns were semi-agricultural in character. It is important to link this evidence to that retrieved from rural farmsteads in order to understand the relationship between the producers and consumers of agricultural commodities. In terms of crop regimes, on most sites spelt wheat is the main wheat crop in cultivation, but emmer-type remains are still present to a small degree.

In contrast to the evidence of arable agriculture, there is limited information on animal husbandry from animal bone as its survival from the rural farmsteads has been poor. However, excavations at Upper Moor, Throckmorton and along the Wyre Piddle Bypass have produced small animal bone assemblages and associated molluscan, insect and pollen remains which suggest that pastoralism played an important role in the economies of these sites, which are located on the clay and gravel deposits on the terrace margins north of the River Avon (Vaughan 2005; Griffin *et al.* 2005; Andrew Mann, pers. comm.). This corresponds with the lack of evidence for large-scale processing of cereal crop remains from these sites. Similarly, animal bone

assemblages of Roman date from sites along the Wormington to Tirley pipeline (Higby 2006) generally correspond with other 'native' or rural sites from the region and Britain (King 1978; 1984; Noddle 1987 cited in Higby 2006), with animal bone assemblages being similar in character to those of Iron Age date, and in particular, no evidence of the improved breeds seen on Romanised settlements.

Animal bone from a more unusual site – a pond with associated ditches at George Lane, Wyre Piddle – shows a more Romanised character as there is a dominance of cattle and horse, which is common for the Roman period (Warman 2007). There was also some evidence of bone working, suggesting craft activity here. Animal bone survival on other rural sites in the Severn Valley, and generally north and west of Worcester, has usually been poor, so interpretation of the animal husbandry economy has been difficult. There is some evidence for a cattle-dominant agricultural economy in some areas of Worcestershire; consequently, the movement of cattle to market in Worcester and the distribution of beef to consumer sites elsewhere is likely. There is no evidence from animal bone to support this, because of the poor preservation of bone in the soils over large areas of the county and because the movement of animals from one specific area to another is difficult to prove. There is also limited supporting palaeoenvironmental evidence for a largely pastoral landscape from the areas mentioned above as the wide base of evidence needed has so far only been recovered on a small number of sites. However, there is some evidence from late Roman contexts at The Hive, Worcester (Baxter forthcoming) that cattle were brought in from some distance, and from different locations. This is supported by the morphology of the crania of cattle skulls and isotope analysis. In the latter case (Montgomery *et al.* forthcoming) strontium, oxygen and sulphur isotope analysis of cattle teeth and bone show that none of the six individuals included in the analysis was raised or grazed in the vicinity of Worcester. Two are likely to originate from Herefordshire, south-west England or southern Wales and the remaining four from areas of granite or ancient rocks (Proterozoic and Archaean) principally found in Wales, the Lake District, northern Scotland or outcrops such as the Malverns. Of these areas, Wales is the most likely location for droving cattle to, or through, Worcester.

Consumption

Artefacts

The Roman economy involved the production and distribution of goods for general marketing in a monetarised economy. Worcestershire clearly participated in this system, but there are variations across the county, and from different site types, that await quantification and assessment. Worcestershire was itself the source of some of the raw materials that were in demand, ensuring that core and economically valuable activity took place in the region. Much of the iron, pottery and salt probably left the region to form the basis for productive activity elsewhere, but being the source of such important commodities meant that local supplies are likely to have been plentiful and cheap.

The most notable Worcestershire site in terms of evidence for consumption is Bays Meadow villa (Droitwich). The status of the villa is reflected in some exceptional finds. In addition to the ring mentioned above, these include: a fragment of green marble inlay (*Lapis Lacedaemonius*) from the Greek Peloponnese, an extremely rare commodity in Roman Britain and found, for example, at the palace at Fishbourne (Barfield and Roe 2006, 188–9); elaborate bone veneer from a funeral bier; and mosaics. The quantity of coins from this site clearly reflects the involvement of the villa in a monetary economy. Unfortunately detailed quantification of the pottery assemblage is not available. Such data would be the basis for an interesting study to quantify the forms and fabrics from this high-status site, for comparison with other sites in the county.

The pottery evidence from Worcestershire in general reflects access to wide trade networks. There is, however, a need for a synthetic study of data from Worcestershire to assess variations in access to, and use of, pottery and other finds; between the north and south of the county; and between sites of different functions, periods, and varying levels of access to markets, roads and rivers. A range of widely traded British pottery sources is represented on most sites, including Dorset, Mancetter/Hartshill, Oxfordshire, and Bedfordshire/Northamptonshire. Imported samian, from Gaul, is also found on most sites, in varying quantities. Variations between different site types, for example in the quantity of decorated vessels, seem on present evidence to follow patterns noted elsewhere (Willis 2005). Amphorae

from a range of sources, containing wine, fish sauce and olive oil, and continental mortaria and other fine wares are also found on a variety of sites, though usually in small quantities. This may reflect the character of the sites excavated, as amphorae are generally more common on military sites. The impression has been of a richer material culture to the south of the county, following the distribution of villas (e.g. Millett 1990, fig. 48), towards *Corinium*, the capital of the Dobunnic *civitas* and in later Roman Britain, *Britannia Prima*. This impression needs to be rigorously tested with quantified data, including the increasing body of Portable Antiquities Scheme data. If the impression is true, it seems to reflect a weaker engagement with Roman culture. The reasons for this are likely to be complex and to change through time. Further research would contribute to wider studies of Romanisation in Britain.

Evidence for literacy reflects a desire to engage with Roman culture at a deeper level, and the occurrence of graffiti on pottery has been shown to reflect site type (Evans 2001, fig 12). Roger Tomlin (pers. comm.) notes that Worcester and Droitwich have both produced a handful of pots with ownership graffiti, though none was remarkable (Tomlin and Hassall 2006, 484, no. 57; Tomlin and Hassall 2001, 395, no. 35; Frere and Tomlin 1990–5, II.8: 2502.5, 2503.12 and 308; Tomlin and Evans forthcoming). The Kempsey stone inscription slab or milestone referred to above (WSM 2121) had evidently been reused, and its original location is unknown. Roger Tomlin notes as follows: ‘On current evidence there is next to no evidence of literacy in [Roman] Worcestershire.’ This reflects the general military bias of Romano-British epigraphy, associated with forts and fortresses and towns with a military presence, so it is not that surprising. However, the two civilian ‘controls’ we have – curse tablets and rural finds of styli – also fail to contribute. Samian inkwells (Ritterling 13) represent another class of find associated with literacy. The impression is that these are very rare in the county, though this has not been quantified. Fieldwalking at Defford (WSM 30370) produced one example, though there was nothing else in the assemblage to indicate a particularly high status site (Evans *et al.* 2008). This is an area where PAS data could perhaps contribute. Tom Brindle (pers. comm.), in his research on PAS data from the county, has identified potentially interesting assemblages at Pershore,

including a large collection of coins and brooches along with small numbers of artefacts associated with writing, and toilet articles. Brindle notes that most other findspots in the county generally share similar 'rural' artefact profiles. It would be useful to collate data from all fieldwork across the county. Graffiti can include drawings as well as writing. Excavations at Hindlip produced a more elaborate than usual identification mark, on the shoulder of a Severn Valley ware jar. This was thought to depict a Roman *modius*, or bronze corn-measure, holding ears of corn, a motif found on coins of Vespasian and his successors and representing imperial provision of food, sometimes explicitly the *annona Augusta* (Tomlin 2010). The drawing was too crude and incomplete for certain identification, so it was difficult to know what significance could be attached to it – whether for example it symbolised 'abundance' or even the issue of official rations.

An association has been noted elsewhere between portable ovens with sites where bread or other foods might have been supplied to larger numbers of people; sites associated with salt making and/or farming; and sites by major roads, temples or, at Chester, the amphitheatre (Darling 2012). The larger assemblages from Worcestershire are consistent with this model. The ovens at The Hive are associated with a large aisled building on a road leading down to the river, perhaps to a crossing point. The site is in the suburbs of the Roman town, in an area where quarrying was also taking place. The neighbouring City Campus site is near enough for the large group of material there to have derived from the same or related ovens. Both sites were outside the main area of settlement, perhaps allowing space for any resultant fires to be brought under control (Cool 2006b, 51). Ovens at Droitwich may have been associated with the salt workers. Ovens at Hindlip are associated with large enclosures, thought to be where animals were brought and corralled before being taken to market (Wainwright 2014b). On present evidence, they do not seem to be associated with the higher-status settlements; for instance, none was recorded from the late Roman villa at Bays Meadow, Droitwich (Barfield 2006), and the early Roman oven from the Childswickham villa site is a distinctly different type, with a flat, perforated top (Hurst 2004).

Evidence for large-scale cereal production (consisting of rich deposits of cereal crop waste generated during processing) appears to be concentrated in the Cotswold/Avon zone on relatively large rural farmsteads. In only one case is there evidence for large-scale storage, presumably at the location where the crops were to be consumed, This is Hanbury Road, Droitwich (de Moulins 2006) where a rich assemblage of charred cereal grain and chaff was associated with a timber structure interpreted as a granary. At Deansway, Worcester grain-rich assemblages were found in the postholes of timber structures; these were interpreted as the results of minor domestic accidents rather than the destruction of a larger grain store (Moffett 2004, 547). At Worcester College of Technology, a rich assemblage of charred plant remains from a later fill of a ditch were interpreted as possible malting waste from a corndrier or burnt chaff/fodder store waste. As these were in, or on the edge of, civil urban settlements it is assumed that the crops were destined for consumption at these locations. Evidence of this nature is rare, probably because the crops would only get burnt in store in accidental granary fires. Burning of cereal crops in quantity would have been much more common in corndriers during processing or in smaller quantities during cooking and piecemeal processing.

Evidence for the introduction of herbs, fruit and vegetable cultivars associated with the Roman occupation is lacking. Despite systematic sampling of Roman deposits on excavations at Deansway (Moffett 2004) and The Hive, Worcester (Pearson forthcoming); and in Droitwich at Dodderhill Fort, Bays Meadow villa (Straker 2006) and Hanbury Road (de Moulins 2006), the only cultivar recorded from urban settlements apart from cereals is flax at The Hive. The lack of non-cereal cultivars may be due partly to the rarity of waterlogged or mineralised deposits in Worcestershire; these are the types of deposits where this type of waste from food or cess would have accumulated. However, waterlogged deposits encountered at The Hive, Worcester and in the centre of Droitwich have not produced much of this evidence. In Warwickshire, wells at Alcester and Mancetter (Greig 1988) were similarly devoid of exotic cultivars or animal species.

Exotic animals and pests associated with stored food may also be expected on sites of this date. Their presence is more likely in urban areas than on farmsteads on gravel terraces and floodplain areas, the

preservation of insect pests being largely dependent on waterlogging or mineralisation. Two bones belonging to a midget or toy dog comparable to the Maltese type were found from a late Roman pit, and bones from dwarf-type Roman dogs from deposits of early/mid-third to early fourth century at The Hive, showing evidence of a Romanised lifestyle (Baxter forthcoming).

Animal bone assemblages characteristic of Romanised settlements occur at Worcester. At Deansway, the assemblages of bone from Roman phases were small and only limited interpretation could be made. However, some characteristics which may indicate Romanisation include the presence of domestic fowl, and in the third to fourth centuries, the dominance of cattle in the hand-collected assemblage (Nicholson and Scott 2004a and b). Similar characteristics were noted in the Roman animal bone from Newport Street (Warman 2015), although there was a greater range of species, wild and domesticated, including red deer, horse, goat, dog, cat, shrew, field vole, house mouse, chicken, goose, raven, frog, herring, eel and tope. The bone assemblages from Bays Meadow Villa (Noddle 2006) and the fort at Droitwich, Dodderhill (Mays 2006) were similarly Romanised in character. Both were dominated by cattle of a size comparable to those found in southern England. At Old Bowling Green and Friar Street (Droitwich), the proportion of cattle increases markedly from the early to late Roman period (Locker 1992).

In summary, there is evidence for a more Romanised economy on some sites where staple agricultural products are concerned (large-scale production of cereal crops and a bias towards a cattle-dominated economy) but the distribution of the plant and animal bone evidence for this is different. The evidence for a more Romanised arable economy is found on both the rural farmsteads in the Cotswold/Avon zone (at the point of production) and in the main urban centres (at the point of consumption). The animal bone evidence for a more Romanised economy is, however, found more at the point of consumption in the main urban centres as these areas are where more bone waste is deposited, and where deep, well-sealed deposits aid good preservation. Evidence for a more Romanised economy in the form of more diverse food resources (exotic/introduced cultivars and animals) is so far very limited.

Coins and the economy

Since this paper was originally presented there has been a huge increase in reported coin finds, thanks to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (see Deacon, this volume). It has not been possible to review this data for the purposes of this paper, but this is something that clearly needs to be done. Comparing the PAS data for coin loss in Worcestershire with that for Britain as a whole, and Richard Reece's data (Reece 1995), shows that there are patterns to be explored (Figure 4.11). Worcestershire, for example, has a higher than average proportion of coins dating to Reece Periods 1 (Pre-AD 41), 7 (AD 138–61) and 10 (AD 193–222). Sam Moorhead of the British Museum notes a need to produce a systematic listing of all the Worcestershire coin finds, site-finds and hoards (pers. comm.). This would have to include: all existing excavation publications and county journals; grey literature; HER data; museum collections, where unpublished collections are often present; and PAS data for the region. Of particular interest is the 'Bredon Hill hoard', found in South Worcestershire (Henry 2011): 3874 radiates stored in a pot, closing with 36 coins of Probus, dated to AD 276–82. Roman hoards are not common in Worcestershire and, while this hoard is in many ways typical of 'radiate' hoards found in Britain, it has national significance; unusually, the find spot was excavated, revealing that it was buried inside a building (Roger Bland, pers. comm.). Based on stratigraphic and ceramic evidence, the hoard was originally thought to have been buried after c. AD 350, at least 70 years later than the latest coins. The date of deposition, however, is currently under review as part of a major project studying hoards and hoarding in Roman Britain (Sam Moorhead, pers. comm.).

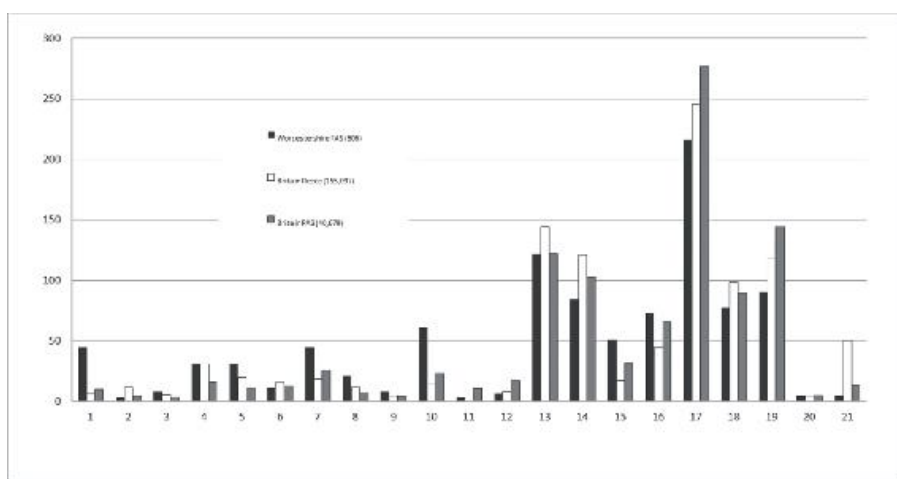


Figure 4.11 Coins: comparison of data for Worcestershire and Britain, by Reece Period (1–21), coins per million

Environmental change

An increasing body of evidence for environmental change comes from analysis of sediments and pollen and macrofossil remains from off-site organic palaeochannel deposits, with occasional examples from deep waterlogged pits. The majority of sites are located on gravel terraces, but a small number have provided an opportunity to investigate past changes in flooding and alluviation. For example, a number of sites in Worcester extend from the gravel terrace on to the floodplain. At Newport Street (Davenport 2016), sand and gravels are overlain by 3 m of fine-grained alluvium which built up until the later second century when they were cut by Roman features; in places the alluvium was overlain by layers of iron slag, presumably to consolidate wet ground which may have been subject to periodic flooding. Similarly, at The Hive, Roman pits dating to the second to fourth century were cut into alluvial layers, with cultural deposits above infilled palaeochannels showing variation in ground-water levels and apparent attempts to stabilise the ground with layers of iron slag (Bradley forthcoming).

Palaeoenvironmental evidence to date is limited but suggests that tree cover in the main river valleys was generally low during the Roman period, as it was for much of the British Isles. This is particularly the case in the Avon and Carrant Brook valleys, for example at Beckford (Greig and Colledge 1988), Wyre Piddle Bypass

(Elizabeth Pearson, pers. comm.) and at Broadway Bypass where high levels of cereal pollen were recovered in association with a large dump of charred cereal crop waste (Hurst and Pearson 1997). Similarly, in the Severn Valley, pollen evidence from two sites in Worcester suggests relatively open conditions (Head 2016; Richer and Daffern forthcoming) and a similar landscape is indicated by insect remains at Stourport (Osborne 1996). However, some wetter areas of the floodplain of the Severn Valley were only cleared of woodland in the post-Roman to medieval period (Brown 1982). Few local pollen profiles span the Roman and post-Roman periods, and hence little evidence is available from this source to date. A possible post-Roman abandonment phase has been identified from a sequence at Beckford (Greig and Colledge 1988), on the basis of a discontinuation of cereal pollen, but the evidence is tenuous.

Evidence for the effects of industry on surrounding woodland would be significant, particularly from the three identified major industries of salt, pottery and iron. However, no studies have yet been carried out with the aim of detecting this in the environmental record.

Research directions

Resource identification

Mapping cropmarks

Cropmarks are a major source of evidence for Romano-British rural settlement in Worcestershire, and there has been a strong local tradition of aerial photography. By their very nature, cropmarks are heavily focused upon the county's gravel terraces and thus provide a particularly valuable resource in managing and understanding these areas. At present only those cropmarks in the area surrounding Bredon Hill have been systematically transcribed through the National Mapping Programme; the extension of this to cover at least the river terraces would be a valuable means of collating and capturing these data sources. The apparent variation in settlement forms between south-east and north Worcestershire, discussed above, could be explored through this more comprehensive dataset in conjunction with consideration of variations in material culture between these two areas. This would lead to a greater understanding of the character of occupation in these areas and thereby strengthen assessment of site

significance and methodological approaches during evaluation and mitigation of sites.

Mapping alluvium

The picture currently generated by the HER is that some areas of the main river valleys were more densely settled than others; however, this is probably more a product of the differential visibility of sites in different areas than a true reflection of past patterns of activity. There is now increasing evidence that some Roman sites may be buried beneath alluvium and such sites clearly have very high potential, as good preservation of deposits, artefacts and environmental evidence can be anticipated.

In the Carrant Brook valley, accumulation of alluvium in the early Roman period has been demonstrated at Beckford and Aston Mill Farm (Dinn and Evans 1990, 62). A similar picture would also appear to be true of some sectors at least of the Severn Valley. An evaluation at Ripple Quarry strongly suggests that alluviation was ongoing in the Roman period, while Roman deposits associated with ash, cinders and pottery were recorded in the nineteenth century below 4 feet (1.2m) of alluvium (Allies 1852, 62–4; Deeks and Jackson 2003; Miller *et al.* 2004).

In the Severn Valley, where aggregate extraction has expanded in recent years to incorporate wet-working of sand and gravel reserves buried beneath alluvial deposits (as at Ripple and Clifton Quarries), the mapping and dating of alluvium should be regarded as a high research priority as this will provide an important corollary to the basic HER site distribution, highlighting those areas where sites covered by alluvium are likely to be present. The value of using techniques such as LiDAR, specialist remote sensing and boreholes, geoarchaeological input and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating for mapping (within a GIS), modelling and understanding alluvial deposits (as well as palaeochannels, terraces and other valley floor landforms) has increasingly been recognised and has been successfully piloted in the Severn Valley through the Severn Valley Geoarchaeology Project (Jackson *et al.* 2011; Jackson *et al.* 2012). The dating programme which formed part of this project (using both OSL and radiocarbon dating) demonstrated the value of these for establishing reliable geochronologies. This confirmed the presence of

alluvium deposited from the early medieval period onwards, thereby demonstrating the high potential for Roman and earlier sites to be located masked beneath this alluvium and thus the value of mapping its extent.

Predictive modelling

The potential value of integrating mapped cropmarks, known settlement sites and other HER data, along with river valley landforms (alluvium, palaeochannels, terrace units etc, as described above), within a GIS for the main river valleys has been demonstrated through the Severn Valley Geoarchaeology Project (Jackson *et al.* 2011). Of particular value is the use of the resultant data in the identification of locations with high potential for prehistoric and Romano-British settlement and other activity. Examples include gravel islands which are now largely masked beneath alluvium but which were more topographically distinct in the past and thus potentially provided favoured locations for settlements, and palaeochannels where activity on the channel margins may be present. Such areas can be prioritised for more extensive sampling and survey.

Mapping of small wetland sites with potential to contain organic material suitable for palaeoenvironmental study in a GIS predictive model has been trialled (Pearson 2010; Jackson *et al.* 2011; Pearson 2012; Pearson *et al.* forthcoming), along with a system for scoring the deposits according to the potential for well-preserved organic deposits to survive today and for their accessibility. This model would add to the data on areas which can be targeted for extensive sampling and survey.

Artefact studies integrating GIS could be used to explore socio-cultural landscapes and environmentally influenced distributions. The Worcestershire HER exemplifies an innovative approach to GIS use. There are also new initiatives elsewhere, which could perhaps be adopted in Worcestershire, to integrate museum collections with spatial data, and make this information easily accessible to researchers (Cowie and McKeague 2010). One possible study would be a reassessment of the distribution of Malvernian wares in relation to roads, rivers, different settlement types, date, and other pottery types, to include cost-surface analysis. Another might be the study of known kilns in relation to topography, soils, geology, woodland and potential

marketing routes, and based on this an attempt to model predictively other likely pottery-producing areas. A further approach might be to model the accessibility of sites in Worcestershire to the *colonia* at Gloucester and the *civitas* and provincial capital at Cirencester, and to assess assemblage type in relation to this. All of these would involve the collation of large quantities of data, but this would be greatly facilitated by the publication of county grey literature online.

Surface finds: fieldwalking and the portable antiquities scheme

Remote sensing has provided new sources of data for mapping the historic landscape, but fieldwalking remains an important method for identifying, dating and determining levels of activity across sites. The presence of a GIS-based HER allows data from these very different approaches to be integrated, so long as field data are recorded to an appropriate level of spatial accuracy (Evans 2004b).

Future data collection should not rely entirely on developer-funded projects since these tend to reinforce the bias towards the more economically developed areas of the county. One potential research direction would be to focus targeted fieldwork, perhaps in conjunction with local heritage groups, on dating cropmark enclosures through fieldwalking and possibly limited evaluation trenching. Such work would be particularly welcome in less well-studied areas such as the Teme valley. Extensive fieldwalking and rapid geophysical survey of areas where cropmarks are poorly represented should be encouraged in order to attempt to identify and date sites away from the more obvious fieldwork targets that cropmarks represent. It would also be of considerable benefit to ensure that surface scatter assemblages are recorded to a consistent standard so that inter-site comparisons can be made.

An example of this sort of approach would be the long-term field research carried out in collaboration with a local archaeological group (South Worcestershire Archaeology Group), and through the local community, in Hanley Castle parish (Hurst 1994), albeit focused mainly on defining the medieval pottery production in this area. Other fieldwalking by the same local group has also proved useful when carried out over a long period across a large swathe of south Worcestershire, and this has been instrumental in demonstrating the presence of numerous Roman sites in the countryside. A recent review

and reworking of this material has suggested that this local investigation would be best carried out with resources being available for the identification and logging of the finds to a standard such that the data can be readily incorporated into the HER (Evans *et al.* 2008). In addition, this project reviewed whether the finds data could be usefully linked to the underlying archaeology (cropmarks and geophysical plots), and it was concluded that to achieve this, there would have to be a change in the field method to allow higher-resolution plotting of the finds. This aspect should be further addressed in the course of future fieldwork.

Metal detecting is another source of surface finds now that data are recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The PAS suggest a number of research topics, many of which are of relevance to Worcestershire (<https://finds.org.uk/research/projects/suggested>), for example whether regional brooch distributions correspond to Iron Age tribal boundaries, or whether regional variations can be detected in artefacts associated with personal adornment (such as bracelets, finger rings, nail cleaners, cosmetic sets and mirrors). AHRC-funded research has included a study of Roman rural landuse, comparing PAS and HER data and including Worcestershire (Brindle 2014a).

Research themes

Chronology

There are suggestions that a significant episode of settlement dislocation occurred in the second century, with some sites that had been occupied from the Late Iron Age being abandoned. This sequence has been recognised elsewhere, for instance in Warwickshire and the Upper Thames Valley (Booth 2001). The chronological evidence from Worcestershire is not as strong, however, and synthetic studies of the dating, pattern and character of the large number of Roman rural settlements investigated in recent years across the county would undoubtedly go a long way towards addressing this situation.

Pottery assemblages in the county are dominated by Severn Valley ware. Fieldwork undertaken since Webster's study (Webster 1976) has provided good stratified sequences of pottery, supporting and to some degree refining the dating that he proposed. However, many Severn Valley ware forms can still only be broadly dated, which limits the precision with which many sites can be dated.

Finally, the end of the Roman period and the immediately post-Roman period in Worcestershire are extremely poorly understood.

Military sites

Very few sites in Worcestershire can presently be proven to have a Roman military association, and thus the first challenge should be to test those sites that have been assigned this function, such as Grimley. However, several military sites were located just beyond the county boundary (Greensforge, Metchley and Wall Town), and the presence of these may have impacted on adjacent parts of the county. It is perhaps significant that these are all north of the county, and potentially associated with the earliest military presence in the region, as with an early marching camp at Droitwich (Hurst *et al.* 1988). Evidence for the suggested fort at Worcester should continue to be actively sought.

It has recently been suggested the military did have a long-lasting and important influence on the West Midlands throughout the Roman period, through the military's demand for mineral and natural resources which were exported from the region to supply garrisons to the west and the north (Esmonde Cleary 2011). There is potential for further consideration of military links to the productive industries of Roman Worcestershire.

Transport

Basic research is still required to confirm the routes of some of the Roman roads in the region, and even in the case of the best-attested routes (e.g. from Gloucester through Worcester and Droitwich and northwards) there are many sections which are not archaeologically proven; routes that go east/west are most in need of attention. It would be very worthwhile to plot less-Romanised routes from aerial photographs, or LiDAR, as it is highly likely that earlier trackways remained in use; this could be demonstrated if settlements along these lesser routes could be dated, perhaps in the first instance from fieldwalking.

Worcestershire has some key multiperiod industries. Diagnostic Malvernian pottery was produced in the Iron Age, Roman and medieval periods, and has contributed to studies of trade in all these periods (Peacock 1967; 1968; Vince 1977). The distribution of Iron Age briquetage has also been well studied (Morris 1983; 1985), while

documentary and place-name evidence has been used to identify Saxon to early medieval salt routes. The ability to study changing distributions through time, from defined sources, should help period-specific factors to be identified.

The River Severn probably served as the main conduit for the passage of heavy goods as well as other material, and the best way to chart this would probably be through the continuation of the research by Peacock (1967) and Webster (1976), in which the distribution of early Roman Malvernian and Severn Valley wares were respectively plotted. Allen and Fulford's (1996) study of Dorset Black-Burnished ware provides a contrasting distribution. A great deal of quantified data has been recorded since these studies were completed, and as suggested above the development of GIS has greatly improved our ability to analyse distributions in relation to a range of environmental and social factors. It may be possible eventually to characterise iron objects to an iron source through the study of slag inclusions (David Dungworth, pers. comm.), in which case distribution plots for ironwork could also be constructed. The issue of transport is also relevant to determining the source of the iron ore itself that was smelted at Worcester. Unfortunately it is unlikely that riverside installations of Roman date will be observed due to the radical raising of the river level throughout Worcestershire in the mid-nineteenth century.

Urban settlements: Worcester and Droitwich

Although there is widespread evidence for prehistoric occupation at Worcester (in particular the late Iron Age), it is in the Roman period that the origins of Worcester as a substantial settlement seem to lie. Determining the extent, dating and character of Roman Worcester has largely fallen to development-related archaeological projects, and these have been notably successful in defining many aspects of the town. Other characteristics have not been fully addressed, and area-based, research-driven projects and overall syntheses of the recorded evidence would be valuable supplements to the site-based work carried out to date.

Key research themes are:

- Establishing the extent of the Roman town, in particular in the Lansdowne area to the north-east of the main town, where

placename evidence suggests that an otherwise unrecorded centre of occupation may be present, and further work to understand the relationship of the town with its immediate hinterland;

- The origins of the town including the nature and extent of Iron Age occupation and the location of a Roman fort;
- Better understanding of the road network and river crossings, both within and beyond the town;
- Definition of the nature of activity in the centre of the town, including the defences and other infrastructure, and public buildings (if any);
- Reassessment of existing evidence, including distributions of artefacts and building materials, to track changes in settlement density, layout and character through time;
- Understanding the origins of the iron industry, changes through time, and its relationship with other industries;
- Late Roman Worcester and the transition to the early medieval period.

The character of late prehistoric Droitwich remains uncertain, and the emergence of Roman Droitwich also presents many issues. Further excavation would undoubtedly help address issues such as:

- Was there an early Roman military phase to salt making?
- Where were the salt-makers living in both the prehistoric and Roman periods, or were the springs liminal and, therefore, involved in some more socially complex scheme of exploitation?
- What impact did the arrival of the villa have on salt making?
- Where are the Roman salt-making installations from the second century AD onwards?
- What was the impact of Droitwich salt-making on the surrounding landscape?
- Why was the villa site totally abandoned and what happened at the end of the fourth/early fifth century elsewhere in Droitwich?

Villas and rural settlements

The few villas present many questions and any discussion of these sites probably only accounts for a relatively small part of the Worcestershire countryside. Given its location, the villa at Droitwich must have been focused around the salt industry and its integration

into the surrounding landscape is therefore problematic, especially as no obvious farm buildings were identified on the site, although corn-drying was taking place. It is unknown whether such a foundation would be expected to also be accompanied by a landed estate. If so, its more agricultural activities were clearly centred elsewhere. The Stonebridge Cross buildings might represent such an outlying centre (Miller *et al.* 2004).

The villa at Childswickham (Patrick and Hurst 2004) is situated on a rich agricultural soil and could typically be interpreted as a standard agriculturally based estate-centre. Certainly there were associated ancillary buildings and these could well have had an agricultural function. Its foundation date, probably in the third century, also locates it in the mainstream agricultural villa trend, as seen elsewhere across southern England. Presently there is no way that this site can be understood in terms of the wider landscape, as any related research along these lines has still to be done.

The COSMIC+ agri-environment schemes which resulted in the testing of numerous cropmark sites on and around Bredon Hill provided tantalising evidence of a number of sites featuring buildings with at least stone-built footings, suggesting that many more of these sites may await discovery. This information supplements that from Childswickham and several other locations in the Vale of Evesham (e.g. Nettlebeds, Cleeve Prior, Middle Littleton, Wickhamford and Charlton) which have been postulated as potential villas or at least more highly Romanised rural settlement traditions than appear to be prevalent elsewhere in the county. These may indicate that patterns of rural settlement within the Vale of Evesham, and especially on and around Bredon Hill, were influenced by the highly Romanised rural settlement pattern seen in the Cotswolds immediately to the south. This is a model which warrants testing.

Further investigation of rural settlements, especially in the north and west of the county, should provide more data with which to test the hypothesis that the pattern and morphology of rural settlement differs in these areas to that found in the Avon valley and further south. Does the apparent difference in site morphology (isolated ditched enclosures compared to articulated systems of enclosures, field systems and trackways) and cultural material reflect differential agricultural economies and patterns of social organisation? Excavation

and morphological analysis needs to be supported by consistent monitoring of all deposit types to test for the presence of environmental remains. A broad landscape framework for the period needs to be developed, and research questions should be explored both through new fieldwork and through re-examination of older museum collections and synthetic analysis of more recent datasets.

Of the areas to the north and west where aggregates are present, the Teme valley, although little exploited by quarrying, is of note since there has been very limited archaeological research in this part of the county. Similarly, rural areas of the Severn Valley, north of Stourport and in the north-east of the county around Bromsgrove, have been subject to only limited archaeological research in the past and have aggregate resources which are either subject to active exploitation or could potentially be subject to future exploitation. These areas might display different settlement patterns and economic strategies compared to the better-researched areas in the south and east of the county.

Unenclosed settlement is currently poorly represented in the record, yet is likely to be present in some areas. In many ways the detection of such sites is hampered by the same factors as affect the detection of unenclosed sites of other periods, though the durability of many aspects of Roman material culture does produce surface scatters. Improved field evaluation methodologies now routinely employed on large-scale developments should increase the detection rate for such sites.

Religion and burial

The fact that relatively few burial sites have been located across the county means that we know little about Roman burial practices in this area, or about the health and age profile of the Roman population. Rural cemeteries have rarely been identified except where large-scale excavation and/or salvage recording has uncovered extensive areas, a situation which may be improved by increasing sample levels used in evaluation. A detailed review of existing reports might highlight religious or votive finds that have not been identified for the purposes of this study. It may also be that pre-Roman traditions continued in to the Roman period, represented perhaps by structured deposition (cf. Martens 2007). This is something that could be considered in future

work.

In some burials, whether in wet or dry soils, organic remains such as pollen and plant macrofossils may survive which could potentially provide information on burial practices (e.g. burial with herbs as votive offerings). Samples should be taken from burials on suitable soils for environmental analysis. Similarly, environmental samples from cremation burials and associated deposits may contain evidence of pyre debris.

Production

Simon Esmonde Cleary has identified the rich resources of the West Midlands region as central to the regional assessment for the Roman period (Esmonde Cleary 2011). Though Roman Worcestershire had a wealth of resources and significant production was carried out, basic milestones have still not been achieved, such as the excavation of a complete Roman salt workshop, or iron-smelter's complex. Although a pottery workshop has been recorded in some detail at Newland Hopfields, the published report highlighted several areas needing further research (Evans *et al.* 2000, 76). The kiln structure was very truncated and the surviving evidence therefore very fragmentary. Excavation of a more complete kiln, if one survives, would allow the Malvern kilns to be characterised with greater certainty; there are, for instance, no archaeomagnetic dates for any kilns. Little is known about the number of kilns in production at any one time in the Malvern area, nor how these are distributed across the landscape in relation to settlement sites. There is still much to be learnt about the supply of raw materials, including the impact of their sourcing on the surrounding area. The iron workers presumably used firewood and charcoal in large quantities. Charcoal in particular is likely to have been produced close to Worcester and other production centres, as it deteriorates if moved over long distances overland (though it could have been transported more effectively by water). In neighbouring Herefordshire, the assessment of the major iron-working centre at *Ariconium* has concluded that the supply and transportation of charcoal may have been as influential on the siting of production centres in the region as the availability of iron ore and the distribution networks for finished product (Jackson 2012, 196). Given the considerable fuel demands that would have existed also for the pottery

and salt-production industries within the county, it must have been the case that woodland management and the supply of charcoal and other fuels was a major industry in its own right. This suggests that it would be useful to carry out wide-scale sampling and analysis of charcoal deposits from iron-smelting and other industrial sites across the county, including Worcester it would be particularly relevant to sample for pollen information in order, potentially, to examine the impact of the industrial activity on the wider environment, and to establish whether woodland management was being developed to protect future provision (see comment below). Other basic questions remain, such as the provenance of the iron ore that was being used. The products of these industries were presumably transported across the West Midlands, though how far, and in what direction, are still largely unknown. Apart from pottery production, it is still largely unclear how the other substantial Worcestershire industries (salt and iron) were keyed into the wider economy of Roman Britain.

Distinguishing between woodland decline resulting from the effects of industry on the one hand, and the expansion of arable agriculture or settlement on the other, is not straightforward, but this may be possible where studies are carried out that detect woodland clearance and metalworking or smelting together (see below). Analysis of charcoal from kilns and ovens may help to identify the timber resources used to fire kilns used for various industrial purposes. Where well-preserved roundwood is present, it may also be possible to detect coppicing and other aspects of woodland management. Features visible on LiDAR images of the Wyre Forest (an area with a history of charcoal production) have been interpreted as charcoal-burning platforms (Pearson and Daffern 2012) and are also known to exist in the Forest of Dean (Jon Hoyle, pers. comm.) but there is currently no evidence that any of them are Roman. Their possible presence could be borne in mind when surveying or excavating areas where charcoal burning for industrial fuel supply is suspected, particularly in the Wyre Forest and Feckenham Forest. Sampling for recovery of charcoal may help to confirm whether the interpretation of these features is correct, and provide information on both the types of timber being used and the management practices, such as the length of the coppicing cycle. Charcoal can also be used for radiocarbon dating of these features.

More use could be made of methods by which the relative importance of arable and pastoral agriculture can be assessed, particularly in order to support information on the distribution of sites showing evidence of crop processing or storage in large quantities. A broad base of evidence is needed across the county, from both the Cotswold/Avon zone and other areas. Sequences of organic and alluvial deposits can provide evidence on flora and sedimentation. Where good assemblages of, for example, pollen, plant macrofossils and insects are present, comparison of arable and pastoral indicator species may enable the balance between arable and pastoral landscape to be assessed. Increased alluviation or colluvium build-up may relate to intensification of arable agriculture. The question of whether some areas of towns were semi-agricultural is also important.

Worcester is thought to have been an important market for cattle, but at present it is difficult to link rural animal bone and urban animal bone evidence to interpret the relationship between producers and consumers. Methods which could be used to address this question need to be considered, such as isotope analysis (Montgomery *et al.* 2014), which could be applied to newly collected assemblages as well as museum collections from selected sites across the region in order to develop an understanding of patterns of supply.

In the light of the poor preservation of animal bone assemblages across the county, and particularly on the mostly acidic soils of the sand and gravel terraces, the identification of sites with substantial and well-preserved animal bone assemblages should be regarded as a priority. Indirect evidence of pastoral regimes may also be gained from analysis of settlement and field pattern morphology (to reveal stock management features such as waterholes, droves and drafting gates), in tandem with insect, pollen and molluscan analyses which can provide evidence of grazed grassland. Remains of parasites associated with stock-keeping may also come from environmental samples (e.g. dung beetles). Fish bone is understudied, on account of the low levels of bone generally present, but analysis of even these small assemblages may help to identify exotic or deep-sea species, and hence trade in fish during the Roman period.

In order to determine the level of crop processing being carried out on settlements, and identify any crop-processing zones, it may be necessary to continue with the strategy adopted in Worcestershire of

widely extensive sampling within sites, followed by rapid scanning of samples to identify clusters of richer deposits of charred cereal crop waste or stored crop products.

Isotope analysis may also complement soil micromorphological analyses at sites thought to have been important for cattle corralling and penning. For example, the extensive dark earth deposits in Worcester were carefully analysed during the Deansway (Worcester) excavation, and it was concluded that these deposits represented evidence for extensive penning of livestock from the second century to the fourth century AD (Macphail 2004). As there was no evidence for intensive animal butchery or beef consumption, it was suggested that the evidence could be interpreted as a specialised cattle market that formed an important part of the settlement's economy alongside iron production (Dalwood 2004). The outlines of a fairly extensive Roman cattle-farming and marketing system can now be tentatively outlined, on the basis of recent fieldwork and other research. There is evidence for rural sites with a specialised pastoral farming function west of the Severn, such as Top Barn Farm (Grimley) where there are large, deep-ditched enclosures which may have been used for corralling cattle. Hooke (2008, 95, figs 4 and 8) has recently discussed an extensive network of east–west routes west of the Severn, north-west and south-west of Worcester, which may have originated as droveway routes for driving stock between upland grazing land and the Severn and Teme valleys. This network may have an early origin and have been used during the Roman period, a research question that could usefully be explored. It can be suggested that there was extensive cattle-ranching in Worcestershire, with cattle collected at Worcester and supplied as livestock or salted meat to major consumption centres; it would seem plausible that these were the major towns to the south, Cirencester and Gloucester. This hypothesis is worthy of further investigation.

Marketing and consumption

While it should be assumed that both Worcester and Droitwich had a market function, it is not clear where such market areas were located. At Droitwich the large number of coins from Bays Meadow villa might be suggestive of a market function, especially in the later Roman period (Shiel 2006). Other larger rural centres might also have a market function (e.g. the settlement site at Hinton on the Green;

Figure 4.3), but these remain unproven.

There are many possible lines of research that could be based on artefacts (e.g. concordance analysis, inter- and intra-site analyses in GIS), which have not yet been carried out in this region. However, as the quantity of finds published increases, and the quality of the data recorded improves, this will hopefully provide more opportunities for research into patterns of consumption in the region. Elsewhere, it has been possible to demonstrate variations in the pottery assemblages of different site types, for example an emphasis on jars in rural assemblages (Evans 2001). The standard publication of detailed quantification by vessel class, as well as fabric, would allow patterns in this area to be assessed. These could then be compared with the evidence from other finds, for example coin profiles. It is clear that products such as Severn Valley and Malvernian hand-made wares and the local source of salt will have given the region a strong sense of its own identity; this may have been deliberately fostered given the individual character of the Severn Valley ware when viewed against the back-drop of contemporary Roman pottery in other regions.

Waterlogged deposits on settlement sites are of high priority (particularly urban sites) for retrieving evidence of exotic cultivars, garden plants or specific crop pests (such as grain weevils) for example. Features of interest would include wells, deep-cut features such as pits and ditches, and ponds (ornamental or fishponds).

Environmental change

Where changes in vegetation are concerned, the emphasis for research on these profiles needs to be on the relative importance of arable and pastoral agriculture, and on detecting signs of the intensification of arable agriculture. The question of whether there was continuation of occupation at many sites towards the end of the Roman occupation can also be researched to some degree by looking for signs of woodland regeneration (or lack of it) in pollen profiles covering this period.

Where a sequence of deposits contains well-preserved organic remains, small-interval sampling for pollen remains (and macrofossil remains, where present) may be needed to look for signs of agricultural decline or woodland regeneration towards the end of the Roman period, as well as the impact on woodland of the supply of

charcoal and wood fuel to the pottery, iron and salt industries.

A greater emphasis on radiocarbon dating may be needed at the assessment stage to establish whether the pattern of woodland clearance seen in a well-preserved pollen sequence, for example, conforms to the established pattern or not.

Conclusions

If nothing else, this paper has demonstrated the transformative effect of development-related fieldwork on our understanding of Romano-British Worcestershire. Nearly all of the sites mentioned have been investigated in response to developments of different types since 1990 (in particular urban development, road and pipeline construction, aggregate quarrying and the cumulative effects of intensive agriculture). A substantial proportion of these have been excavated, or at least published, since Lockett's 2002 review paper. Similarly, there have been several reviews of aspects of the material since 2002 (cited in Introduction, above). However, the contribution of research projects must not be ignored; for instance, Dyer's surveys of Pendock and Hanbury (Dyer 1990; 1991) still provide virtually the only landscape-scale views of settlement patterns.

The impact of this fieldwork can be seen in a developing understanding of Romano-British activity both in the countryside and the towns. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is still much understanding to be gained. The number of excavated sites in Worcestershire is still quite small, as will be seen from the repeated mentions of certain sites in this paper; these places are usually not exemplars of a larger dataset, but the only known sites of their type. The point has by no means been reached in Worcestershire where identifying and excavating new sites merely produces 'more of the same'. However, it will be important in the future to be very aware of developments, both in understanding and techniques, and to seize opportunities wherever possible to add value to what could otherwise become routine fieldwork; isotope and residue analyses are just two examples of these.

In spite of the relatively limited dataset, it has taken a decade and a half to produce this paper. While this means that it has been possible to incorporate information from recently excavated and published sites (and also understanding from recent review projects, in

particular the Roman Rural Settlement Project), it also means that the excavators of those sites have not had the benefit of an up-to-date context for their work. It will be crucial to ensure that future revisions of the research frameworks take place on a much shorter cycle. It will also be important to compare the Worcestershire experience with that in neighbouring counties. Finally, it is to be hoped that some of the specific targets mentioned here, for instance ceramics, industrial and agricultural production and trade patterns, can be addressed through projects which have research at their core, whether academically based or development-related.

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Herefordshire in Roman Britain

Keith Ray

Introduction: ‘Roman’ Herefordshire in context

Kenchester is likely to have functioned as the centre of a pagus. That it achieved a higher rank after the reign of Numerian (A.D. 283–4) is improbable, both because of its small size and because of the low degree of romanisation attained in the surrounding countryside. Apart from Ariconium (Weston under Penyard), which was the centre of the iron mines of the Forest of Dean, the only other settlements known – Stretton Grandison, Blackwardine, and possibly Hereford – were little more than posting stations, and the general level of life was probably that represented at Sutton Walls, where a small community continued to occupy the Iron Age hillfort. (Rivet 1964, 153).

This succinct view of the status of much of present-day Herefordshire in the political geography of the Roman province of Britannia was included in a discussion of the canton of the *Dobunni*. The far north of the county, for a long while part of the neighbouring county of Shropshire, was then and is still now regarded to have been part of the canton of the *Cornovii*, centred upon *Viroconium* (Wroxeter). As such, another ‘posting station’ settlement, that of Leintwardine (identified as the *Brano Genium* of the Ravenna Cosmography; Rivet and Smith 1979, 207, 275), can be added to Rivet’s settlement list, since it lies within the modern county boundary.

At first glance, little has changed in our understanding of the period from AD 45 to c. AD 425 in Herefordshire in the fifty or so years since Rivet wrote his thumbnail sketch in 1964. The existence of many more possible small enclosures (most of them approximating to what Rivet and his contemporaries would have called ‘native

farmsteads’) has been revealed from aerial photography, especially following the English Heritage funded Herefordshire Aerial Archaeological Survey of 2002–12 (HAAS; Musson and Ray 2007), although by no means all were occupied in the Romano-British period; several of these have been investigated on the ground. At the same time, however, only three or four previously unknown sites that might, with some justification, be denoted ‘villas’ have been discovered since then, for instance at Magna Castra Farm close to Kenchester and at Wellington in the Lugg valley north of Hereford (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985; Jackson and Miller 2011). It is probably no coincidence that both sites can be regarded as falling within the hinterland of Kenchester, as is a third that has been revealed through aerial photography, geophysical survey and test-excavation close to Credenhill village. Somewhat more unexpectedly, another such ‘villa’ site has been found at Weston-under-Penyard.

What has changed markedly in the intervening fifty years is how Roman Britain has come to be viewed by those studying its history and archaeology. While some archaeologists continue to see ‘Romanisation’ as the proper focus for study, others now consider the key cultural and political themes to be instead those such as ‘domination and resistance’, and ‘colonialism and cultural diversity’ (see, for instance, Forcey 1997; Laurence 1999). Moreover, there is a growing realisation that the very idea of a single ‘Romano-British period’ across these four centuries is itself an unsustainable artifice historically. There were instead at least two distinct eras, with a break in the late second/early third century. Perhaps there were even as many as four recognisable periods, with the possibility of bracketing-off also as historically distinct both the early ‘pacification period’ on the one hand and the mid-fourth century onwards on the other (for a discussion of these issues of time and change regarding Roman Britain, see James and Millett 2001).

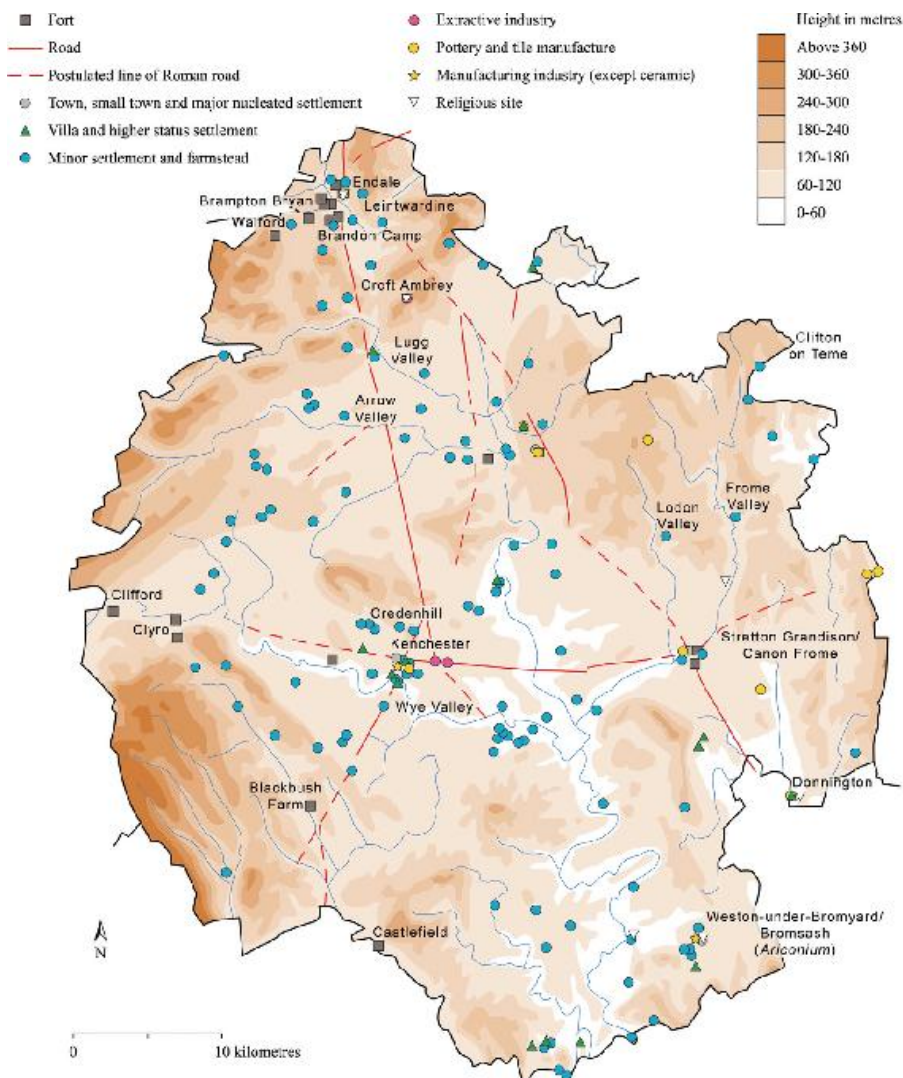


Figure 5.1 Map of Roman roads in Herefordshire, and key sites mentioned in the text (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

For Herefordshire, Stan Stanford brought a new perspective to the story from the late 1960s onwards by suggesting the existence of a separate identity for the area as the land of the ‘Decangi’. (Separate from either the *Dobunni* or the well-attested *Deceangli* of Flintshire (attested from stamps on lead ingots from Flintshire). This view has not found favour from any quarter.) Stanford also stressed what he saw as the consequences of the devastation and dislocation caused here by the Roman invasion and pacification, involving a continuing impoverishment of the Wye basin area throughout the Roman period

(Stanford 1991, 89–95, 99–102). In support of this view, he remarked upon both the small size of Kenchester and the lack of inscriptions from the town. However, he also noted the fact that it possessed a bastioned town wall and an immediate hinterland that included several villa-like farmsteads. As such, Stanford recognised Herefordshire as a land of paradox, historically and archaeologically, in Roman times. Situated as it is athwart upland and lowland Britain, this should not be considered surprising, nor was it so only in Roman times. Nonetheless, the evidence for activity in ‘the Roman centuries’ in the county is in need of some reappraisal, not least because, as Mortimer Wheeler remarked as long ago as 1934, ‘Herefordshire cannot complain of its share of Romanisation – a share which, when the moment arrives, could easily and substantially be increased by a little judicious exploration’ (Wheeler 1934, liv).



Figure 5.2 Sutton Walls hillfort, north of Hereford: from the east (Photograph: Chris Musson (HAAS 05-CN-2014))

Since then, while the work of Norman Bridgewater in the south of the county and of Stan Stanford in the north made some inroads in this direction, it has arguably only been in the first decade of the twenty-first century that a string of discoveries has marked such a ‘substantial increase’ in knowledge of Roman Herefordshire (Figure

5.1). For instance, a fragment of a Roman inscription – one of the few ever recorded from the county – was retrieved from a development site in Leintwardine in 2001. It records the dedication of an altar to Jupiter and the Imperial Numen (Tomlin 2002; Ray 2015, 182, figure 5.16), and while executed in a ‘rustic’ manner, it indicates the possibility that further such inscriptions may come to light. Another discovery has been of an area of enclosures within an extensive Romano-British field and settlement system in the central part of the Arrow valley, part-excavated in both 2003 and in 2008 (White 2003; Border Archaeology 2008). This has indicated the intensive nature of Romano-British agriculture in some parts of the county, and raises questions of both environmental stress and of the possible existence of villages during the Roman period here.

In 2007, 18 burials were examined from within a cemetery immediately outside the ‘posting station’ that was nonetheless probably a walled settlement in the Frome valley near Stretton Grandison (Surety, Children and Priestley 2009). One of the two burials within wooden coffins found here was completely preserved in the alluvial sediments. These finds (including a fine stone-lined well) provide the most vivid evidence yet for the extensive nature of the civilian settlement here. In 2008, the substantial stone-built foundations of a tower sited on the sandstone cliff overlooking the River Wye at Ross-on-Wye were found during works to repair the enclosure wall for the eighteenth-century Prospect gardens. The nature of the complex here (including the burial of horse remains) is still under consideration, but it may be that the tower, built four-square and with a small internal circular roofed space, was created within the south-west angle of a rectilinear enclosure (Wellicombe and Priestley 2011).

In 2010, work undertaken to create a flood-diversion channel in Kenchester parish involved the excavation of a swathe of land to the east of the walled Romano-British town that revealed much about what started out as part of the un-walled focal settlement, but that became a commercial and industrial suburb (Webster 2011). Finally, in 2011 aerial survey revealed an extensive area of settlement to the north of the previously defined northern limit of intensive activity at the site of Blackwardine, to the east of Leominster. As a result, this place begins to emerge as an important centre for north-central

Herefordshire in the Roman period: and yet it was a settlement that subsequently disappeared without trace until cut through during the construction of the Bromyard to Leominster railway in the nineteenth century.

The rest of this essay will review these and other recent discoveries, along with much of the previously retrieved evidence for the period in the county, according to a number of different themes and in reference to several distinct geographical locations and areas. As is customary in such surveys, and in accordance with the organisation of this volume, this survey will begin with the immediate pre-Roman period.

The later pre-Roman Iron Age background

In the later Iron Age, finds of pottery and salt-containers indicate that communities in Herefordshire were linked into wider trading networks. As yet, we know relatively little about domestic structures within farmstead-scale settlements, but there were both open and enclosed sites of this type. The site investigation focus has, until recently, been almost exclusively on the hillforts, but this situation is now changing. Several hillforts appear likely to have continued in occupation into the Romano-British period ([Figure 5.2](#)), but there is certainly a case for a number of such sites to have been abandoned some while before the end of the Iron Age (see Haselgrove 1997, 60–1, for a discussion of Croft Ambrey in this light).

In recent years, a number of small farmstead-scale settlement sites featuring later Iron Age activity have been investigated. These have included, for instance, the earliest levels of the site at Field Barn Farm, Brookhall, just to the east of Kenchester (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985); Huntsham Court, Goodrich (Taylor 1998); Moorcourt Farm, Lyonshall (Guest 2002); Cold Furrow, Lyonshall (Guest 2002); Wellington (Jackson and Miller 2011); Oxpasture, Leen Farm, Pembridge (White 2003); The Ridgeway, Cradley (Hoverd 2001); White Rocks, Garway Hill (Atkinson 2006), Castle Field, Stapleton (Dorling 2007); Westfield Crofts, Lower Town, Ashperton (White 2007); and The Hyde Field, Brookhouse Farm, Avenbury (White 2011). Some of these sites featured both open and enclosed phases of activity (as at Huntsham and at The Ridgeway, Cradley), and the enclosures themselves vary markedly in form. While some are sub-circular in plan (as defined by

their surviving ditches and mostly as seen from the air), others are more rectilinear.

It is probably significant that occupation at several of these sites appears to begin in the period 100 BC to AD 50, and then continued without a break at a number of locations well into the Roman period, in some cases into the fourth century. This begs a number of questions about the mechanisms involved in producing settlement shift in the second century, such as whether there is a general reason for the break with earlier patterns of occupation. That this does not result from a general process of abandonment of larger sites appears to be supported by evidence that at least some of the hillforts apparently also remained in occupation into, and sometimes even throughout, the Roman period (although they may alternatively have been re-occupied in the Roman period after some length of time abandoned).

While the idea of cultural shift and the migration of groups from other areas remains unpopular as an explanation for breaks or terminations in occupation seen at numbers of sites in a single time horizon, the evidence for widespread change in the occupation of farms and of some major sites merits being considered in its own terms, without prejudice. As such, a modified version of ‘the invasion hypothesis’, and one that features an ‘infiltration’ of migrant groups into an already well-populated landscape, needs perhaps to be ‘re-installed’ among the interpretive possibilities for the history of later Iron Age communities (see papers in Haselgrove and Moore 2006; see also Sharples 2010).

Excavated finds of briquetage, principally from the larger defended enclosures (including ‘hillforts’) but also from some farmstead sites, suggests that there was widespread use in Herefordshire of salt derived both from Droitwich in Worcestershire and from Nantwich in Cheshire (Morris 1994). This reflects a wide range of contacts, and possibly also an independent status for the polity or polities in Herefordshire at the time. This independence may be borne out also by the distribution of coins, despite the suggestion that the presence of *Dobunnic* coins represents at least clientship (Hurst 2002; van Arsdell 1994; Ray 2002; 2015, 155–6).

One of the most remarkable developments in later Iron Age Herefordshire was the beginning of intensive iron working concentrated in the south of the county. While the focus for this was

the area to the east of Ross-on-Wye and north of Weston-under-Penyard, sites further to the north and west may also have early origins (see below; Jackson 2012; Ray 2015, 301–5).

Roman invasion and pacification

A far from complete picture

Herefordshire still lacks a coherent sequential framework for the Roman army's presence both in the initial stages of the Conquest, and in the aftermath of at least two major uprisings that occurred locally in the first century AD. Until recently, Graham Webster's account of the period from AD 48 to 60, up to the campaigns of Suetonius Paullinus, constituted the most sustained effort to make sense of the available chronologies (Webster 1978; 1993). This has now been augmented by the account by Barry Burnham and Jeffrey Davies in their edited volume *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches* (2010, 37–62). There are, nonetheless, at least two outstanding problems that confront, and at present also confound, any attempt to increase the degree of understanding of the local situation in Herefordshire.

The first problem concerns the geographical gaps in coverage of known forts and marching camps in the county (Burnham and Davies 2010, figs. 2.3 to 2.7). For instance, the only definite forts or camps known in the Wye valley are those at Clifford and (just over the border in Wales) at Clyro, near Hay-on-Wye. Meanwhile, although a series of forts and camps are known at Walton, west of Kington, there are no proven sites on either the Lugg or the Arrow to the east. One aim of the recent programmes of aerial survey in the county has been to determine whether these gaps are genuine, but so far no entirely convincing new sites have emerged in these two 'blank' areas (but see below).

The second outstanding problem is the limited and patchy recent coverage of archaeological site investigations. So, for instance, the well-known sites at Clifford have not even been subject yet to geophysical survey or evaluative excavation. Nor have potential marching camp sites, such as one revealed by aerial photography in the Arrow valley at Ivington, west of Leominster, been tested in this way. Elsewhere, the publication of past excavations, such as those at Castlefield Farm, Kentchurch, Monnow valley (Clarke and Davies

2010), only in summary, has inhibited a fuller understanding of sequence and significance.

Identifying forts and camps

The most important and best-known grouping of sites is that in the Leintwardine area. This area, around the confluence of the rivers Teme and Clun, has, it would seem, the largest known concentration of Roman forts and marching camps anywhere in the Welsh borderlands. There are a total of eight locations hereabouts at which such installations were apparently created: at Brandon Camp (rather, a ‘military supply base’, see below), Jay Lane Leintwardine, Walford (2), Buckton (2) and Brampton Bryan (2). Some have been investigated, primarily in projects undertaken by Stan Stanford (1968).

Besides these sites in the Leintwardine area, and at Clifford and Kentchurch, there are two further forts known to the south of the River Frome at Canon Frome (Stretton Grandison), and others have been recorded at Blackbush Farm, Abbey Dore (Ray 2010; Ray and Richardson 2010) and Castlefield, Kentchurch (Clarke and Davies 2010). Other forts or camps are suspected but unproven at *Ariconium* (Jackson 2000; 2012) and at Kenchester (postulated beneath the town; Webster 1993, 73–4 cites the evidence of three harness beads and five melon beads; Guest 2010 takes a more sceptical view). Another site in the Frome valley has been claimed only 2km west of Canon Frome, at Yarkhill, although the material concerned more probably comes from a domestic settlement (Stanford 1991, 89).

Blackbush Farm on the Dore, Castlefield Farm on the Monnow, the easternmost of the two forts at Canon Frome (at Canon Frome Court (Ray 2010); in the literature often referred to as ‘Stretton Grandison’), and Jay Lane, Leintwardine on the Teme are regarded as auxiliary forts (Davies and Jones 2006). Walford, Brampton Bryan and Buckton Park (all on the Teme), and suspected but uncertain sites at Ivington on the Arrow and at Byford on the Wye are seen as marching camps (*ibid*).

The possibility that a fort exists to be found beneath Kenchester has been enhanced by discoveries made during the recent campaign of investigations at Credenhill Fort (Dorling 2007; 2008). An early Roman period assemblage recovered here in 2007 was identified as potentially military, but in 2008 two discoveries were made that

added a 'structural' dimension to this, and appear to mirror the situation described through the work of Frere and St Joseph at Brandon Camp (see below).

Meanwhile, new aerial photography has produced hints of further forts near Bodenham on the Lugg, close to Ivington Camp in the Arrow valley, and at Vowchurch on the Dore (Musson and Ray 2007). Field names have also been adduced as potentially indicating Roman military sites at a number of locations, amongst which the most convincing topographically is perhaps the 'Chestons' group of field names that appear in a small area in the north of Marden parish on the River Lugg (Richardson 1996, 458).

Elsewhere, suspected sites have been disproven. An example is an enclosure at Cradley, near the Malvern Hills, claimed as a Roman military site from aerial photography. This has been shown, upon investigation, to have been an Iron Age settlement (Hoverd 2000). Many of the sites listed in the Herefordshire Historic Environment Record as possible or probable camps or forts can likewise be dismissed since although they too were in occupation into Roman times, they were farmstead enclosures. Cropmark features at Brinsop, Kimbolton and Mansell Gamage in particular can be rejected (SMR 6880, 30202 and 30284 respectively: Davies and Jones 2006, 158–9).

Another disproven example is at Cold Furrow, Lyonshall, which has also been shown to be a farming enclosure (Guest 2002). To the north-east of Bromyard, a further claimed site has also been the subject of exploratory excavation. This double-ditched 0.5 ha site at Tedstone Wafer is a possible minor camp, but little more is known about it than from a small trench (Webster 1954). The finds (like those from the similar small enclosure at Clifton-on-Teme) could easily rather represent another civilian enclosed farmstead, since the most readily datable sherd reported is of second-century Severn Valley ware (Webster 1954; Stanford 1991, 88; Stanford's suggestion that these are military sites rests largely upon their occupation of ridge-top locations).

The scope and sequence of military sites in the Clun-Teme confluence area

The most concerted efforts of investigation, then, have been the

excavations at forts in the Leintwardine area, with extensive excavations carried out at Brandon Camp, Jay Lane (immediately west of Leintwardine), Buckton fort, and Leintwardine itself. This complex of sites, close to the Clun-Teme confluence, includes three sites of more than local significance. The first is a pre-Roman Iron Age fort (Brandon Camp) re-used as a military supply-base early in the campaign of conquest (Frere 1987; 2010). The second is a very large but undated marching camp covering 25.6ha (just to the east of Brampton Bryan village). The third is a camp rebuilt in stone with corner towers and turreted gateways in the second century (Buckton fort: Stanford 1968; 1991, 84–6).

The supply-base at Brandon Camp, near Leintwardine, included irregular buildings described as barrack-blocks, of a highly temporary nature. The more easterly of the two groups of rectilinear buildings within the Iron Age fort was dominated by the foundations of what was interpreted as a massive granary whose foundations comprised a series of 23 parallel slots each 12m long dug into the bedrock (Frere 1987; 2010). A remarkably well-defined straight paved road with side-ditches appears to have been built right up to the east gate of the fort, from a location exactly 300m to the south-east (Musson and Ray 2006, 45). The site was in use between c. AD 55 and 60 (Frere 1987, 69).

Meanwhile, the timber fort at Jay Lane, Leintwardine, was in use by the 60s AD, and this may have belonged to a succeeding campaign (Stanford 1968). The Buckton fort was also built in timber and was in use by the 80s AD, so perhaps it in turn succeeded the Jay Lane fort. This timber fort was then, in turn, refurbished in stone early in the second century, only being dismantled in the 140s AD (*ibid*). However, how the four other marching camps in the area fit into this sequence is entirely uncertain, since none has been examined archaeologically.

Equally uncertain is how, or indeed whether, Leintwardine fits into this sequence. Stanford has suggested (1991, 86–8) that it was a ‘village-fort’ belonging to the period after AD 160. This interpretation has since been questioned, in view of both the absence of evidence for military structures and the apparent civilian character of the occupation (Brown 1998, 554–65). A yet more recent review of the evidence has sought to reconcile these two contrasting views, with the suggestion that it might be thought of instead as ‘a civilian town with military associations’ (Berry 2010, 306–7).

That the area witnessed some serious troop-movements cannot be doubted. The Brampton Bryan camp, at 25.6 ha in area, would have taken a legionary detachment of 2000 troops (Frere 1987). This is the largest marching camp so far known in Wales and the Marches among those whose plan is completely known (Davies and Jones 2006, 18–9). Its *porta decumana*, sited as usual at the highest point, faced east (*ibid*, 14). Its gateways were of the traverse type, and it had outworks, amongst which was a *titulus* flanking its west side (*ibid*, 146–7). The more easterly of the two forts at Canon Frome had a similar feature beyond its west gate – again, this perhaps indicates some contemporaneity, although the construction date of neither is known (Ray 2010).

Finally, the intricacy and scale of the Buckton complex is intriguing. The sizeable stone-founded *mansio* building (the existence of which has been known for some time) that existed to the east of the fort was a refined building, as was the headquarters building of the fort itself, to judge from some remarkable recent aerial photographs (Musson and Ray 2007).

Towards an invasion period narrative

The multiple camp and fort sequence in the Leintwardine area reflects the time-depth and complexity of military operations in this area, and the continuing strategic importance of the Welsh borderlands for nearly a hundred years of the life of the Roman province. Unfortunately, even this level of detail is not available for many of the remaining sites for which we have any archaeological data.

A partial exception is the fort at Castlefield, Kentchurch, in the Monnow valley north of Monmouth. This fort appears to have covered and, by inference, to have deleted the site of a presumed Iron Age enclosure. It has been suggested that the fort was built at least by the Neronian period (ended AD 68), and two phases of timber buildings were noted in the interior (Richardson and Musson 2004, 36). Further north at Blackbush Farm, Abbey Dore, a double-ditched fort apparently occupied sometime after AD 85 was discovered by aerial photography in 1989 and was subsequently field-walked but has not been excavated (Ray and Richardson 2010).

Meanwhile, it has been proposed that the fort at Clifford preceded that at nearby Clyro, but the case appears to have been based upon

topographical arguments alone (Webster 1993, 85). On the same latitude away to the east in the Frome valley, neither of the forts observed from aerial photography at Canon Frome have been securely dated and arguments for their dating are based only upon limited surface collection at one of the sites. Indeed, a recent review by this author of the available aerial photographic cover suggests that there is a single-ditched enclosure – presumed to be a marching-camp – partially overlapping with and apparently underneath the better-recorded double-ditched eastern (Canon Frome Court) fort.

It is of interest, then, that the provisional dating of the ‘military’ assemblage from Credenhill fort should fall within an early period. The evidence from the recent excavations has included indications of the presence of another major granary founded on the same kind of parallel earth-fast slots found at Brandon Camp. This was, as at Brandon Camp, sited on the eastern side of the interior of what is nonetheless a much larger hillfort, and its association with Lyons-ware and with Spanish amphorae sherds suggests that it is of the same date, c. AD 55–60 (Figure 5.3).

Kenchester is situated at a distance of 20 km from forts to east and west and this ‘gap’ in provision remains the most compelling reason to continue to seek the presence of a fort here. The style of the Roman military harness fittings found locally has been taken to suggest an early, and probably Neronian, date for any military station here (Webster 1983). If this were to be the case, it would be possible to link this dating with the character of the material from both Brecon Gaer and now Credenhill fort to suggest the presence of a fort belonging to the same Spanish cavalry unit attested in the Brecon fort. On the other hand, the earliest pottery from within the walled area is said to be Flavian in date (Wilmott 1980, 125). This could mean either that any fort here belonged to the 70s AD, or that this was the period when a civilian settlement first developed here, perhaps as part of the process that saw the first widespread construction of ‘civic’ facilities in major towns in the southern areas of the province. In either case, if the pottery is indeed a better indicator of origins than the ‘military metalwork’, an invasion-era fort of the Neronian period would have to be sought elsewhere. Given the topographical dominance of the later town site within the local landscape, this would perhaps be surprising.



Figure 5.3 Trench 4 at Credenhill Fort, 2009, looking west. At left and left-centre, running across the excavated area from east to west, are three of the four parallel foundation slots revealed in the excavation thought to be the foundations for a military granary (Photograph: Keith Ray)

The Blackbush evidence is of interest since its likely construction date fits into the period immediately after Agricola's governorship ended (AD 85). This potentially correlates well with the building of the Buckton fort in timber, and may represent a general re-ordering of the garrisons in Wales and the Marches, culminating in the transfer of the legionary garrison from Wroxeter to Chester.

What are we to make of all this? One thing is clear: we are currently well short of being able to construct a wholly coherent narrative. We can, nonetheless, make a limited number of general observations, and three of these are specified here. First, the reconstruction of the Roman invasion of this area of the Welsh Marches as so far outlined (Webster 1981; Frere 1987; Stanford 1991; Burnham and Davies 2010) suggests that possibly as many as three major campaigns were conducted as part of the initial conquest and pacification process. These were those of Ostorius Scapula in AD 48–50, Didius Gallus in AD 52–7, and Quintus Veranius in AD 57–8. It then seems likely that there were significant 'restorative' campaigns that affected the area of the present-day county, firstly under Julius Frontinus in AD 74–5 in the wake of the Boudiccan rebellion, and either during or just after Agricola's governorship, in the mid-80s AD.

Second, in light of the indications of the re-use of major hillforts as supply-bases, it is possible to infer a campaign strategy that involved using the point where significant rivers issue into the lowlands as the springboard for campaigns into the hills westwards, with strings of camps or forts extending up the main river valleys, as appears to be the case with the rivers Wye and Teme. Moreover, lines of penetration into the upper Wye valley from the lower Wye valley are seemingly marked by the presence of forts on both the Monnow and the Dore. This may trace an advance and later consolidation of control north-westwards through the eastern margins of the Black Mountains.

Third, both the tenacity of native resistance and also the determination of the Roman military commanders is marked by the number of campaigns documented historically, and by the construction and use (attested archaeologically) of forts *beyond* the campaign of Frontinus in AD 74–5, by which latter time the area had, in principle, been completely pacified. The presence of forts built after AD 85, and the maintenance of forts in stone at Buckton and at Brecon Gaer throughout the early decades of the second century, provides a clear indication that a semi-permanent military presence in the region was regarded as necessary until well into the Antonine period.

Rural settlement and agriculture

Hillforts and their annexes

There is a reasonable amount of evidence for continuity of occupation of some Herefordshire hillforts into at least the later first century AD. Besides Sutton Walls, where substantial remains of an otherwise quite small settlement were found (Kenyon 1954), such evidence has been forthcoming from within the forts at both Dinedor and Aconbury, south of Hereford (*ibid*). Intensive occupation has been noted from excavations within the interior of Poston Camp, near Peterchurch (Anthony 1958). Further finds of Romano-British coins or pottery have been recorded from other Iron Age hillforts. These include Herefordshire Beacon; Backbury Camp, near Stoke Edith in the Frome valley; Croft Ambrey; and Risbury Camp and Uphampton Camp east of Leominster. Further such sites include Gaer Cop, Hentland; Wall Hills, Ledbury (Walters 1908, 193); Timberline Camp, Madley; and Capler Camp, near Ross in the Wye valley.

Occupation within hillfort annexes is likely at Ivington Camp, near Leominster, and at Walterstone Camp in the far south-west (Weddell 2000). This tends to undermine the assertion made by Stanford that there was forcible eviction of the native population from hillfort sites in the aftermath of the Roman Conquest (1991, 91–4). The argument for forced removal is also to be questioned from the recent reconsideration of the dating of occupation at Croft Ambrey already mentioned. From the evidence of brooch chronology, it has been argued that the sequence there terminated well before the Conquest, and possibly as early as 150 BC (Haselgrove 1997, 60).

Exactly what form or scale this continued occupation, and perhaps even sometimes re-occupation, of hillforts took is difficult to judge. As Rivet terms it, some sort of community apparently lived within the ramparts at Sutton Walls, and we have noted other sites at which a presence that was sometimes extensive has been recorded. In other locations, the ‘occupation’ may have been limited to occasional visits to shrines to venerate the gods and ancestors (see below).

Villas and farmsteads

In contrast to this simple fact of continuity of occupation of hillforts, relatively few Roman villas or buildings featuring tiled roofs and carefully laid floors (with or without tessellated pavements) are yet known from the county. Those close to Kenchester will be discussed separately below, but sites known outside that area in the centre of the county cluster in the south and south-east. Two villas at Putley and a complex at Donnington, for instance, represent a group in the Leadon valley that continues down towards Dymock and on into central Gloucestershire and the Severn Valley.

Another group is located broadly between Ross and Monmouth in the Wye valley. This scatter includes the excavated villa complex at Huntsham, near Goodrich, that intriguingly was apparently contained within its own precinct wall (Taylor 1998). Other sites nearby that appear also to have featured stone-built structures include Sellarsbrook at Ganarew and Hadnock by Monmouth (the latter just within Monmouthshire). A ‘new’ villa has recently (2015) been discovered as a result of a field evaluation in advance of housing development at Weston-under-Penyard (J. Cotton, pers. comm.), and this extends the Ross-Monmouth grouping slightly further eastwards.

A variety of enclosures, many of which are broadly rectilinear or rectangular in form, have been demonstrated by excavation to contain Romano-British farmsteads. Again in the south of the county, these include the oval earthwork enclosure at Lord's Wood, Whitchurch (Taylor 2000), and the cropmark sites at Foxhall, Weston-under-Penyard (Walters 1999; Jackson 2012). Four further such sites were intercepted and sample-excavated along the course of the Felindre-Tirley gas pipeline in 2007, including one overlooking the River Wye north of Brampton Abbots (Cruse 2013).

In the north of the county, two enclosures have recently been extensively examined at Moorcourt Farm and at Cold Furrow, near Lyonshall (Guest 2002). In the Arrow valley, further enclosures have been traced and dated in investigations at Middle Field and Oxpasture, at The Leen Farm, Pembridge (White 2003). In the Frome valley, enclosures that produced substantial assemblages of material were located and investigated at Westfield Crofts, Lower Town, Ashperton, and at The Hyde Field, Brookhouse Farm, Avenbury (White 2011).

More sites will soon be added to this fast-growing assemblage, since enclosures of the same kind are known from aerial photographs elsewhere, as on the ridge opposite Wigmore Castle and some have been established by field-walking as featuring pottery of the period. Such latter sites include those located just to the north of Hereford at St. Donat's Farm, Burghill (Jackson *et al.* 1999) and near Wellington Court in the same area.

A perhaps higher-status but apparently unenclosed site is located in the valley of the Little Lugg at Liglok Field, Westhild (White 2001). Here the question of site condition is raised, since the remains examined as part of a recent Herefordshire Archaeology plough-damage study were recorded in the 1950s as being relatively well-preserved, with intact wall footings. By 2001, the base of a corn-drying oven was the only recognisable feature to survive *in situ*. This situation mirrors that revealed in 2000 at Coed Lank, Garway, where the only significant trace of a former farmstead found within arable traversed by a Transco pipeline was again the base of a corn-drier.

Nor is the enclosure examined in woodland near Whitchurch the only sub-circular or rectilinear (and likely late Iron Age and/or Romano-British) farmstead enclosure known in the county that survives as an earthwork. A group of three such enclosures was

recorded in the 1970s by the Ordnance Survey on Bircher Common, north of Leominster. During a survey here in 2001, a further possible enclosure was added (Ray and Hoverd 2003). The sites are situated on the south-facing hillside along the 200m contour and seem to be separated by a regular distance of 500 m. Two of these sites feature pendant field enclosures, also of square or rectangular plan-form.

Recent woodland survey has produced further examples of rectangular settlement enclosures surviving as earthworks. One of these is in the north of the county at Wigmore Rolls, near the Leintwardine area Roman camps and forts. Another is at Yarsop, near Hereford, where the site again features an associated field system which appears to be attached to the south-west of the settlement enclosure (Hoverd 2003). That such enclosures did not necessarily continue into the Roman period is demonstrated by the dating of the prominent rectangular earthwork enclosure on the eastern flank of Garway Hill (Atkinson 2006).

Field systems

Field systems that are clearly dateable to the Romano-British period are extremely difficult to locate. However, given the numbers of surviving field systems now being traced in the county, there seems little doubt that some will eventually be proven to be of this antiquity. Some systems approximate closely to the size and scale of the better-documented 'Celtic fields' of central southern Britain. An example is the group of lynchets forming a field system recorded as part of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty archaeological survey at Whitman's Hill Coppice, Storridge, Cradley (Hoverd 2003). A whole landscape of such features survives remarkably intact, but as yet undated, for example, in the area around Whyle, near Kimbolton, in the steep-sided plateau and valley-lands east of Leominster.

Those field systems associated with small farmstead enclosures have already been noted, as for instance those on Bircher Common where the fields concerned comprise pendant enclosures attached sequentially to the west sides of at least two enclosures. Their boundaries are marked by ditches, but only in one case are the boundaries of the fields concerned at all evident as earthworks. At Coleswood, Leintwardine, another undated enclosure, so far recorded only from aerial survey, appears to have a field system attached to it

(Richardson and Musson 2004, 5).

A fragment of one extensive field system has been examined at Middle Field, The Leen, Pembridge (White 2003). The re-cutting of ditches within the field system here may indicate an intensification of arable farming that is represented also in the nature of riverine scour on a fossilised former meander of the River Arrow nearby (Macklin *et al.* 2003). However, it was also suggested that the ‘field’ enclosures were instead paddocks forming part of a farmstead or even a more extensive settlement (White 2003, 45–6).

Villages

The discovery of the continuation of this system featuring small enclosures some 200 m to the south of Middle Field at The Leen during a Welsh Water mains replacement scheme in 2008 enhances the possibility that we are instead looking here at a straggling settlement. The combination of larger fields with small paddocks is suggestive of the kinds of extensive settlement that in some parts of southern Britain approximate to ‘villages’ (for instance, Chisenbury Warren, Wiltshire, and Chalton, Hampshire; Cunliffe 1993, 248–53).

That other such settlements may exist is suggested by the results of recent aerial survey in the county. One such possibility was recorded in 2006 at Coldharbour, south-west of Leominster and also therefore in the Arrow valley. This comprises a series of paddock-like enclosures that could be medieval in date if associated with the neighbouring former ridge and furrow, but could equally comprise a straggle of Romano-British field and settlement enclosures (Dorling 2007, 41).

The environs of Kenchester

An organised landscape

Such discussion of fields and possible villages leads naturally into consideration of the evidence for the organisation of whole landscapes. Probably the optimal location for demonstrating such organisation will prove to be the environs of the walled town at Kenchester. This is in part a reflection of the concentration of known sites in the area, and their apparent relative status. However, it is also hinted at from study of the field patterns that are indicated by surviving boundaries in the area, and that have been studied as part of

the Herefordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project.

It is of interest to note that at Old Weir there is reason to suspect that terraces overlooking the river along the south-facing scarp above the flood plain represent the pre-existence of intensive farming in the form of terracing along the slopes overlooking the Wye (Hoverd and Ray 2011). They appear to be intersected by the Roman Road extending northwards from its crossing-point here. Moreover, what were probably in origin late prehistoric co-axial field systems appear to have been reconfigured hereabouts both north and south of the Wye (and both east and west of Kenchester) to align onto the major Roman road known as Watling Street West (RR6c; Silvester and Toller 2010).

Following the re-orientation, these fields formed a pattern perpendicular to the line of the adjacent Roman roads. North of the Wye this pattern is most clearly evident in the present-day landscape in the area immediately to the north and west of the walled town. Six kilometres west of Kenchester the pattern may have extended either side of a 'branch' road still in part followed by the road leading north from The Portway towards Mansell Gamage. Meanwhile south of the Wye, an extensive tract of land both north and south of Madley has field boundaries similarly oriented onto the Roman road. This zone around Kenchester appears to be the only area of the county where such re-orientation occurred, despite the very extensive passage of the Roman road system through the county. An example of failure to influence an apparently earlier pattern is to be found in the passage of the road running north-south through the landscape to the west of Leominster, in the north of the county.

Exotic rural residences and likely villa-farms

There is an apparent concentration of high-status and specialised building complexes in the vicinity of Kenchester that is unparalleled elsewhere in the county. Only three such complexes are reasonably well-defined, and only one has been fully excavated, although several other sites of unknown character may be suspected from individual finds. The sites concerned are all located within 2 km of the walled settlement. The well-defined sites are Field Barn Farm, located south of the Roman road only 400 m east from the east gate of the walled Kenchester (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985); Bishopstone Rectory, adjacent

to the north of the Roman road 2km to the west (Walters 1908); and New Weir, located on the north bank of the River Wye (Shoesmith 1980; Barber and Walker 1995).

Four other places in the near vicinity of the Roman town have evidence pointing to the likelihood of them being 'villa' sites. The first is near Brinsop Common, where a stone-lined well or cistern at least 12 m deep and containing Romano-British pottery, samian ware, amphora sherds, quern-stone fragments, animal bones, 'and several tons of rough blocks of stone', was found in the late nineteenth century (Elliott 1887). It was concluded that a Roman villa had existed close by (*ibid*, 129), and the well is located not far from an enclosure recognised some while ago from a cropmark (HSM 6880).

A second such place is at Credenhill, lying to either side of the Roman road around 500 m to the north-east of the east gate of Kenchester (Stanford 1971). Here, numbers of coins have been found at different times and a further cropmark enclosure is known nearby (HSM 6287; 52011). Recent (2014) investigations undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology have resulted in the closer definition of this walled complex, with some investigation of the stone-founded buildings. One such building was re-used as the site for a pottery kiln. Less than 300 m to the east a near life-size wholly classical head in oolitic limestone, from a statue of a Roman goddess, had been deliberately buried in a pit (Wilmott 1979). At Stretton Court, 2 km to the east of Kenchester, finds of a coin hoard and a group of bronzes have been reported (HSM 6298; 8466; finds in Hereford Museum). Close by, within the area of the former Stretton Sugwas quarry (at approximately SO 455422), there was a 'probable farm or villa site completely lost by quarrying in the 1960s' and 'Workmen on the site were seen collecting Roman pottery in large quantities (personal observation)' (Shoesmith 1980, 153).

The Field Barn Farm site is the only one among these seven sites to have been extensively excavated. It was found to comprise at least three major phases of activity, all of which had strong industrial dimensions. The first of these, involving a mill and granary, is discussed, along with the characterisation of Kenchester, below. Both the second major phase of Romano-British activity, from c. AD 180, and the third phase (broadly, fourth–fifth century), featured an iron-smithing complex sited to the south of a winged-corridor type 'villa'

building. In the first of these two phases, the main building, oriented north-south and apparently built in stone rather than being timber-framed, featured at least one complex geometric multi-coloured mosaic floor, *opus signinum* floors, three turned stone column-bases in oolitic limestone, and tiled roofs. In the second phase, a further mosaic floor was laid in a room in the north wing, several other rooms featured mosaics, and an external corridor was added to create a west-facing courtyard (Cosh and Neal 2010, 304–5). The south wing was entirely rebuilt to include a two-storey apse on its eastern elevation; tufa voussoirs present here (one at least of which was faced with painted plaster) have been taken to indicate the possibility that ‘the apse may have been roofed with a tufa semi-dome’ (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 90).

During the building of the new rectory at Bishopstone in 1812, a fine multi-coloured mosaic with geometric patterns was uncovered less than half a metre below ground surface, comprising *tesserae* ‘laid in thin cement over a bed of clay’ (Walters 1908, 191; [Figure 5.4](#)). At 10 m square, this is one of the largest mosaic floors ever discovered in Roman Britain, and it lay at the centre of a building complex whose debris extended over an area of approximately 100 m². Subsequently, in 1821, wall foundations ‘parallel with the sides of the mosaics’ were found to the west of the house. On the eastern side a ‘strongly cemented’ wall was found, and elsewhere ‘black earth and bones’ were found in association with cinerary urns – presumably representing the site of the villa cemetery.

The geometrical designs of the primary mosaic, featuring urns and acanthus patterns, are clearly in the style of the ‘Saltire School’, the later of the two mosaicists’ *atelier* based at Cirencester, and which reached its zenith in the fourth century (Cosh and Neal 2010, 292–5). That a likely courtyard villa here could be part of a large complex should not necessarily occasion surprise, given for instance the location of a villa complex of not dissimilar proportions as far west as Llantwit Major on the Glamorgan coast, or indeed the evidence of opulent hypocaust-heated residences within Kenchester itself.



Figure 5.4 Mosaic pavement uncovered at Bishopstone in 1812. The print by J. Friedel shown here is stored in a folio among the collections of the Society of Antiquaries of London (Image © Society of Antiquaries London)

At New Weir, a potentially equally lavish building complex was created. This was levelled into a bank that sloped down to the River Wye, and covered an area around 60 m long by up to 30 m wide (Shoemith 1980; Cosh and Neal 2010, 303–4). Structures with tessellated floors and mosaics may have been inserted into the rear of the south-west-facing bank, and there was a range of buildings oriented north–south, part of which terminated in a room built into the top of a square stone tower standing 4 m high from median water-

level on the river-bank (Barber and Walker 1995). At least one other such tower stood south-eastwards of this, and the riverside may have featured a terrace linking these towers looking directly over the water. An assortment of structural stonework, including column-bases, was found in the river in 1994, while to the east of the main complex is a small octagonal stepped pool comprising four courses of squared and shaped stonework, at the base of which is a circular vertical drain. On the scale of a foot-bath, this structure has been described as a *nymphaeum* (see [Figure 5.13](#)). What is remarkable here, however, is the investment made in creating such a sophisticated structural complex in what must, even then, have been a ‘challenging’ location; this is a point that will be returned to again at the end of this chapter.

An elite focus?

What this combines to suggest is that the Kenchester area was special in some way. One possibility is that the local sub-tribal elite deliberately chose the central area of the county around the Wye and above its confluence with the Lugg as a focus for residence. Such rural seats as appear to have existed here were thereby placed in close proximity to the presumed market at Kenchester, to the Roman road system with links in all the cardinal directions, and to the Wye itself. Such a focus of power and wealth in turn attracted the importation of fine materials, and no doubt provisions, from across the province(s). The area of focus appears to lie on both banks of the Wye, although it is only in the area north of the river that a number of ‘villa’-style sites are known.

An alternative possibility is based upon the suggestion that ‘the *Dobunni* might have been given the land around *Magnis* as compensation for the establishment of the *territorium* of the colonia (of *Glevum*, modern Gloucester)’ (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 74). The source of this suggestion, and the logic for this ‘grant’ to have been made so far to the west, and in the centre of Herefordshire, is unclear. In support of it is the occurrence of tiles stamped ‘RPG’ (*Res Publica Glevensum*); probably made at Minety in north Wiltshire, these are presumed to have come from the roof of a three-storey granary building in an early phase of the Field Barn Farm site (on the sourcing, see T. C. Darvill in Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 162). The suggestion might also explain why a milestone of the *Civitas*

Dobunnorum was later re-used in the stone wall inserted into the earthen bank of the Roman town in the fourth century (see below).

Other settled landscapes

In the Lugg valley

Fascinating though it is, the Kenchester area is not the only part of the county across which it is becoming possible to perceive, however dimly, the existence of a functioning Romano-British landscape. Another such area nearby is being examined in tandem with extensive gravel quarrying in the lower Lugg valley. At Wellington Quarry, the villa or rich farmstead was located on an island of higher ground in a landscape in which water management was clearly at a premium (Jackson and Miller 2011). The investment involved in digging major channels, draining marshy areas, and constructing leats indicates the development of an organised system of estate management in the central areas of the county at least.

A field evaluation at nearby St Donat's Farm has adduced the existence of another enclosed farmstead (as noted above; Jackson *et al.* 1999). However, it also featured the discovery of the remains of what appears to have been a paved roadway crossing a ford and linking that farmstead, and the Wellington villa, with the Roman road at Portway, near Burghill to the west. What is being glimpsed here is the construction of a whole transport infrastructure connecting estate centres with local markets, and beyond this, with the wider province and empire. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that further such 'branch roads' existed and will in time be found elsewhere in the county, connecting the more major routes.

In the Arrow valley

The field studies that have taken place in the Arrow valley, a short way to the north-west of the lower Lugg valley and to the west of Leominster, are also beginning to show a pattern of landscape development – at least up until the third century AD. The sites at Moorcourt Farm and Cold Furrow, near Lyonshall, represent two rectangular enclosed sites located within a short distance of each other, but markedly different from one another in character (Guest 2002). The former, just over half a kilometre to the south-west of the

latter, is seemingly an enclosure with low-status ceramics and a single circuit of deep enclosing ditch. It may have been used seasonally, or as a stock enclosure.

Cold Furrow, meanwhile, on the south-facing slope of a hill to the north, contains higher-status (including imported) ceramics and features a double-ditched enclosure with relatively shallow ditches. This seems quite likely to have been the site of a farmstead residence. Significantly, both sites were shown to have immediate pre-Roman origins and appear to go out of use c. AD 200.

In the Frome valley

In 2004, Herefordshire Archaeology sample excavated an occupation site overlooking the River Frome near Ashperton (White 2011). This was an enclosure site only discovered from the air in 2003 (Figure 5.5). The site proved to have a long and complex history. Occupation of an egg-shaped enclosure began c. 200 BC, continuing into the early Roman period within a reconfigured ditch circuit. Then, c. AD 200, the main enclosure was abandoned in favour of an ‘annexe’ to the west, and the former settlement site was used as a dumping ground for the rich refuse from the later site. At Brookhouse Farm, Avenbury another enclosure began life in the Iron Age. Activity intensified in the Conquest period, and then again in the later second century AD. The range and quantity of ceramics present was unusual for such an apparently modest rural location (White 2011).

The settled farming potential

These are the regions of the county with the most coherent evidence at present for settled farming communities. However, in an interesting study that linked soils to the wider distribution of the then existing evidence base for Romano-British activity in the county (pottery and coin finds as well as aerial survey results and discoveries of structures and excavation projects), Ruth Richardson provided an indication of the extent of potential Romano-British farming activity in the county based upon the distribution of different classes of soil quality. She concluded that much of the county would have supported a mixed farming economy (Richardson 1989; 1993). Recent work has largely borne out her conclusions, with new farmsteads including structures employing roofing and heating tiles and laid floors being found in

areas of highest-quality arable potential, and recent pollen and macroscopic plant remains evidence, for instance from near Rotherwas, indicating open farming conditions and the existence of both pasture and arable throughout the period in just the same areas.

Ariconium and Romano-British rural industry

The Weston-under-Penyard/Bromsash complex

The concentration of iron-working activity in the Weston-under-Penyard/Bromsash area (usually identified as the *Ariconium* of the Antonine Itinerary) has long attracted comment (for instance, Fosbroke 1821). This activity has now been shown to extend back into late Iron Age times. However, it was during the Roman period that the scale of metalworking increased, with the systematic exploitation of the ore-bearing areas of the Forest of Dean and investment in smelting and smithing facilities. The resulting complex of settlement and industrial activity has been synthesised in the ‘Ariconium’ study (Jackson 2000; 2012).

It is clear that there was intensive settlement activity on a ridge near Bromsash, some 6 km east of Ross-on-Wye, and that this included several substantial buildings. However, rather than a narrowly drawn and densely set Roman settlement with urban characteristics, the settlement appears to have comprised dispersed centres of activity within a loosely defined zone. The industrial reason for this was well characterised by Stanford (1991, 101): ‘This open settlement, close to iron ore in the Forest of Dean, was devoted to industry requiring ample space for work and waste disposal’. Besides building foundations and remains that included evidence for plastered walls and mortared floors, Bridgewater uncovered several areas with furnace remains and working-hollows (Bridgewater 1965). Meanwhile, considerable quantities of slag were found in two otherwise ‘domestic’ enclosures 1 km to the north of the main complex at The Great Woulding (Walters 1999).

Robin Jackson has argued that the core area at Bromsash does, nonetheless, constitute a ‘small town’. He noted that ‘At the peak of settlement in the second and third centuries, several town houses occupied the western side of the hilltop where several roads converged.’ On slopes to the south and west, several small enclosures

can be seen to extend alongside the roads, within and around which ‘a wide area was probably occupied by timber houses and other buildings with associated yards and pits’ (Jackson 2002, 13.2; see also Jackson 2012, 184–6).

At least four principal iron-working areas have been isolated in the Bromsash/Weston area (Jackson 2012). The largest of these, excavated by Bridgewater, contained six furnaces together with slag pits and working hollows, and traces of timber buildings. One of these was identified as a charcoal store. Indications of iron smithing were also present. The site was in active use for a period of around a century from c. AD 135 before it appears to have been deliberately sealed, and was then covered by a domestic rubbish deposit. The development of the site, as understood from the results of previous investigation and recent comprehensive specialist analyses of the recovered artefacts, is now fully described in a widely available format (Stevenson 2001; Jackson 2012; see Ray 2015, 305–12 for a detailed summary in the context of the history of iron-working in Herefordshire, including a focus upon the Romano-British period).

Other iron-working and industrial locations

Further evidence of iron-working has come from sites that have otherwise been regarded as villas or farmsteads. An example is the claimed villa at Whitchurch, which produced considerable quantities of slag (Walters 1908, 197). More dramatic still is the site at Cinders Grove, Peterstow, from which it is recorded that many tons of slag and iron-working waste were removed. Nearby, on Peterstow Common, Roman coins and pottery were found within a slag deposit over 4 m deep (*ibid*, 193; see Ray 2015 and Jackson 2012 for a detailed account of the industry at *Ariconium* and more widely).



Figure 5.5 Embanked and ditched farmstead at Ashperton, from the south. This farmstead site is located on the forward edge of a terrace overlooking the Frome valley from the south. It was sample-excavated in 2004 as part of the Frome Valley project (White 2009). Occupation began in the later Iron Age and continued at least to the end of the second century AD (Photograph: Chris Musson (HAAS 03-CN-0704A))

There is no sense, despite this intensity of activity, that there was any imperial control of the south Herefordshire iron industry, such as seems to have been the case in the Kent/Sussex Weald. It seems likely, however, that the ironworks supplied the military, especially in the earlier period, and that some family groups specialised in the production of iron for this trade. A case in point may be the complex recently excavated at Great Treaddow on the western margin of Peterstow parish (Ray 2015, 308–10 and fig. 9.6). Here, double-ditched and triple-ditched apparently ‘domestic’ enclosures were occupied at the same time (from the mid-first to early second century) as intensive iron-working activity that involved both smelting and primary smithing in furnaces set within working hollows (as at *Ariconium*).

In contrast to iron-working, the evidence for pottery production within the confines of the historic county is thin. Until 2014, no certain kiln sites had been found, despite claims for them, for instance at Marley Hall, Ledbury. Here, Alfred Watkins had been shown pottery fragments that he believed must be wasters. However, Jack was of the

opinion that the pottery simply represented the site of another farmstead (Jack 1932). Other pottery production centres have been suggested at Cradley (near the known West Malvern kiln sites in Worcestershire), and at Grendon Green, near Bromyard, but they have yet to be confirmed. A complete kiln was found in 2014 at a former farmstead enclosure site south of the historic core of Credenhill village. The Severn Valley pottery industry is becoming better known, and the Malvernian kilns must have supplied a wide area, but it seems likely that more kilns will be discovered in Herefordshire.

The road network and associated settlements

Greater and lesser roads

The Roman road network, at least as it has survived in the landscape into the present century, is relatively well understood. It is, moreover, recorded clearly in place-names such as ‘Stretton’ (Stretton Sugwas, Stretton Grandison), ‘Stretford’ (locations both east and west of Leominster, on different routes) and ‘Street’ (Kingsland). However, attempting to establish exactly how such a system operated and why the roads are located where they are is more problematical. Several attempts have been made to trace roads that did not survive coherently in the landscape. One method has been to trace documentary references to now-vanished roads. An example is the mention of a paved road as a boundary in an Anglo-Saxon charter for Staunton-on-Arrow (Lewis 2008). Excavation meanwhile has shown that the picture may be significantly more complex than has previously been realised. In this context, the ‘link’ or service road traced at St Donat’s Farm in the Lugg valley has already been noted.

How the roads were laid out and the surfaces were built is a subject that has received some specific attention in recent work. It has, for example, been suggested that a length of ‘Roman Road’ between Stretton Sugwas and Holmer, east of Kenchester, may have deliberately been sited across a Bronze Age round barrow (Patrick *et al.* 2002). At any rate, as part of a modern highway upgrading scheme, several lengths of the road were carefully excavated in 2004. The western part of the area examined was found to have a late Roman cremation cemetery sited across its carriageway, implying that it had gone out of use by that time (*ibid*). Elsewhere, the evidence is

more circumstantial, as with an aerial photograph recording a possible borrow-pit next to the ‘Watling Street West’ Roman road near Kingsland; [Figure 5.6](#)).

Further insights came from a second project, undertaken in 2005 at Old Weir, Kenchester. Here, as noted above, ‘Watling Street West’ descends the scarp facing southwards on to the flood plain. For the first 150 m of its course into the flood plain at the foot of the scarp it comprises an earthwork of monumental proportions with a massive linear causeway mound flanked on either side by broad ditches (which on the eastern side features also a small counterscarp bank). As it approached the River Wye, however, the road changed its form. The first trench excavated in 2005 involved a simple cut across the course of the road as it extended across the silts of the flood plain. The trench revealed that here, rather than being built on a massive foundation, it was ‘rafted’ across the soft ground (Hoverd and Ray 2011). This was a technique also revealed in a section excavated north of Wigmore where the same road crossed a broad marsh (Jack and Hayter 1926, 12–3).



Figure 5.6 ‘Watling Street West’ near Kingsland, showing ‘borrow-pit’ dug beside the road (marked by the modern hedgerow). A small square cropmark to the left of the quarry is perhaps the robbed-out foundations of a roadside mausoleum: the nearest HER entry refers to the same field, and records the discovery of worked stone during ploughing in this part of the field (Photograph: Chris Musson (HAAS 03-CN-0432))

The road at Old Weir also comprised two distinct carriageways. That upstream to the west featured a well-laid compact surface of large cobbles, several of which were rutted and had scrape marks from wheeled vehicles. This surface was set in a very shallow bed of mortar laid straight onto the underlying silts. That downstream to the east comprised a well-cambered surface of light, loosely bonded gravel with a deliberately layered foundation that had been completely refurbished and overlaid on at least two occasions. It was concluded that these distinct carriageways (the downstream cambered carriageway was also raised much higher above the flood plain than the cobbled surface) comprised surfacing appropriate to two distinct forms of conveyance. The upstream solid cobbles would be more useful to slow-moving 'heavy goods vehicles' such as four-wheeled carts, while the lightly gravelled surface immediately next to this on the downstream side could provide swifter passage to light two-wheeled chariots or to horseback riders and pedestrians.

The second trench at New Weir was extended to form an area excavation, since it was placed to locate the north bank of the river crossing and any possible bridge-head, given prior reports of timber piles in the river-bed here (Walters 1908). Most of the 60 m by 30 m area opened up within the later silts here featured cobbled surfacing. Careful recording and sample investigation of this complex revealed three successive periods of construction, with the road approaching the river on three distinct alignments. At least the first of these latter was apparently the approach to a timber bridge. The position of two upright posts represented by two large stone-filled pits perhaps marked the northernmost stanchions of this bridge, actually set within the road carriage-way. All other traces of this structure had subsequently been washed away, at least within the excavated area. Both of the other surfaces partially overlaid this first surface, but they approached the area on a slightly different alignment and were sited slightly downstream of the first road/bridge alignment (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.7 Roman road at Old Weir, approaching the north bank of the Wye looking north towards Old Weir and Kenchester (with Credenhill fort in the background) (Photograph: © Herefordshire Archaeology, Herefordshire Council: with permission)

More recently still, in 2010, the work already alluded to immediately to the east of the walled area of the Kenchester settlement produced evidence for a further series of ‘side-roads’, in addition to the main road approaching Kenchester from the east. While these are discussed further in reference to this work below, it is

worth noting that there is not always a direct correlation between the importance of a road and its dimensions: some of the 'side roads' north and south of the 'main road' immediately to the east of Kenchester were found to be broader and more substantially built.

Not only the connecting roadways of the developed system, but also traditional routes could be paved, and have been traced in recent fieldwork. For instance at Castle Field, Stapleton (near Presteigne in the Lugg valley), another farmstead enclosure with a pendant field system was located from aerial photography (Dorling 2007). Only what appears to have been redeposited Neolithic pottery was found in the excavation of a sample trench across its defences. Moreover, the absence of Roman period pottery from the site appears to suggest that its occupation was likely to have been limited to the Iron Age.

The enclosure and field system at Stapleton appear, however, to have been aligned in parallel with a trackway respecting the south-west-facing side of the farmstead enclosure. This track had been in use long enough to have formed a hollow and further erosion of this hollow had been inhibited by laying cobbles to form a hard surface. The trackway appears to have gone out of use in the Romano-British period, if finds of this date from its surface can be regarded as providing a *terminus ante quem* for its use. The route was along the northern flank of the valley, presumably linking the Leominster area with the upland pastures of east-central Wales. That further roads remain to be discovered elsewhere in the county is demonstrated by the recent noting of routes marked by stretches of road discovered from the air at Mocktree, north-east of Leintwardine, and at Berrington Park, north of Leominster (Figures 5.8 and 5.9).



Figure 5.8 Newly discovered Roman road at Mocktree, Leintwardine. This road, viewed here from the west crossing Shelderton Hill, appears to have been a significant linking road between Leintwardine and settlements in the Ludlow area (Photograph: Chris Musson (HAAS 06-CN-2022-024))

Roadside settlements

The settlements along the road system have, with the exception of Kenchester and Leintwardine, received remarkably little systematic attention. The site near the present bridge over the Teme at Leintwardine that produced the Roman inscription in 2001 is part of a complex featuring a sizeable bath-house, presumed by the excavator to have served a Roman fort here (Stanford 1968). However, in another part of the same complex, parts of Roman stone columns have been found, hinting at the existence here of a *mansio* complex with wings ranged around a central courtyard.

Other focal settlements on known roads came to light during early infrastructure works. One example is Blackwardine at Stoke Prior, east of Leominster. Here, finds were made when the Bromyard to Leominster railway line was being built, and a deep cutting was made. The place-name of the site is also suggestive, with its combination of 'Black-' often denoting the 'black soil' of former Roman settlement occupation, and the Anglo-Saxon '-wardine' element, denoting an enclosure. The site occupies an elevated but level location near Humber church, with wide views westwards over north Herefordshire. It is located on a north-south road that runs broadly parallel with, but some way to the east of, Watling Street West. Finds include both structures and pits that have produced a rich assemblage of material (Brown 1990). The recent aerial survey results have shown that the area formerly understood to have been intensively occupied here extends not only northwards but also to the north-east.



Figure 5.9 A probable Roman road at Berrington Park north of Leominster visible as a pale mark running obliquely across the photograph, above the modern A49. A road roughly following the course of the modern A49 towards Ludlow makes much sense, for instance in the context of the discovery of a ‘winged corridor-style’ villa at Ashford Carbonel to the south of that town (Richardson and Musson 2004, 40) (Photograph: Chris Musson (HAAS 03-CN-0416-17))

Another roadside settlement that was located early on at Stretton Grandison (more properly, Ashperton/Canon Frome) was found largely as a result of the construction of the Gloucester and Hereford Canal. It is located south of where a north–south road crosses the River Frome. This may be the same road that goes through Blackwardine and to the east of Bodenham, and which continues on beyond Ashperton, southwards to Dymock, Newent and presumably ultimately to Gloucester.

The settlement debris here appears to cover a wide area (Buteux 1996), but no buildings have yet been located. The site has been claimed as the *Eposessa* of the Antonine Itinerary, but although it seems possible from its place in the Ravenna Cosmography that this settlement was located within the county, this is by no means certain (Rivet and Smith 1983, 207, 361–2; O’Donnell 1997; Ray 2011). The finds made during the building of the canal included a steelyard weight, a length of gold chain, and much domestic debris including pottery fine wares. The finds were retrieved at depth on the south

bank of the Frome where the southern pier of the canal aqueduct was being built. South of the Frome the canal bisected a field named 'Budberry'. This either referred to an enclosure within the field concerned or to the regular rectangular enclosure with rounded corners that had its western side along the line of the modern A417 that crosses the Frome flood plain here, and whose southern, eastern and northern sides are known from aerial photographs. This represents a fort occupying the slightly raised knoll above the flood plain at this point; this fort was possibly in use in the Flavian period, as noted above.

However, it is evident from aerial photographs of the site that the later Roman road from Gloucester crossed this fort obliquely, and continued northwards to a crossing of the river close by where the A417 does so today; beyond this it joined the projected line of the road running east from Kenchester on the north side of the flood plain. Just within the former fort, a junction with this north-south road was with a road coming from the north-west. A projection of the line of this road would have produced another crossing of the river 200 m or so to the west of the canal aqueduct.

Another junction on this north-south road just to the north of the one with a 'west' road featured another road running eastwards into but apparently not beyond the eastern half of the former fort. In 2007, a series of access pits for a Welsh Water pipeline were dug archaeologically in a line around 100 m apart obliquely across the flood plain from north-west to south-east, just to the south of, but broadly parallel with, the line of the 'west' road from the former fort (Surety, Children and Priestley 2009). Access Pits 4 to 9 (running west to east) produced evidence for intensive Romano-British activity south of the Frome, in Pits 4 to 7 under around 1.5 m of later alluvium. Pit 4 recovered evidence of domestic activity including a stone-lined well to the west of a boundary ditch, but also three distinct phases of a cemetery eastwards of this. Within the confines of the approximately 15 m by 10 m area in which burials were found, upwards of 18 burials were recorded. These comprised a mix of cremations (including five adult burials in late third-/early fourth-century urns) and inhumations including two of second-century date in wooden coffins. From the mid-fourth century there were a further nine inhumation burials, at least one of which was sub-Roman, and probably as late as the sixth

century. Being only some 100 m or so west of the ‘canal’ finds and close to the inferred line of the road coming westwards out of the Stretton Grandison settlement, it seems reasonable to suppose that this was a cemetery on the western margins of that settlement. (Although due to the near presence of finds including ceramic building material, the excavators (Surety, Children and Priestley 2009, 170–2) suggested that they were instead part of a burial ground associated with a separate farmstead.)

The next three Access Pits were dug within the ‘Budberry’ field and comprised a succession of occupation deposits associated with ditches, some of which were filled with dark ‘midden’ material. The density of features suggests that this was part of the ‘Stretton Grandison’ settlement, but on its western fringes. In contrast, to the south of the former fort, Pits 8 and 9 produced wall foundations, another well (into which building stones had tumbled), a laid surface, and a charcoal-rich deposit associated with fine wares. This gives the impression that this area close to the north–south road and the two road junctions had, by the second century, become part of the main area of ‘wealthy’ housing near the core of the settlement.

Another possible site existed under Hereford itself, where there are some clues to the former existence of a settlement of some kind. Not surprisingly, this evidence comes mostly from the area by the presumed former river crossing. The earliest find was of an altar from St John Street, but substantial pieces of two further altars were found during the excavations at Victoria Street (Shoesmith 1982; 1985). At Broad Street in 2000, during the renewal of a main by Welsh Water, observations were made of stone rubble apparently containing *opus signinum*, sealed below medieval levels (Boucher and Rouse 2001). This rubble might therefore represent the remains of significant collapsed Roman buildings, situated around the head of a short and steep valley leading down to the probable site of an early fording-place across the Wye.

These various finds need not, however, imply that a significant settlement existed at Hereford. Rather, it might be that a religious centre developed here, comprising a temple and ancillary structures, the site also being marked by informal trading, as at Frilford, south of Oxford (Henig and Booth 2000). Yet another suspected settlement complex nearby is indicated by a concentration of finds at

Lugwardine. Certainly, the co-occurrence of *-wardine* (OE ‘enclosure’) place-name elements and Romano-British finds appears to form a consistent pattern across the county.

Meanwhile, at Leominster, finds from three locations indicate the possible former existence of a modest settlement complex at the crossing of the Lugg in the vicinity of Broad Street. The first was a claimed discovery of a mosaic floor behind a building on the north side of Burgess Street in 1886 (Walters 1908). This might have been regarded with some scepticism were it not for the discovery in 1962 of several large sherds from a central Gaulish samian ware vessel close to the River Lugg nearby. These date to AD 150–70 and were found by the bridge over the Kenwater (a branch of the River Lugg) on the site of the old gasworks (Buteux 1995, 4). A third, yet more recent, discovery included remains from iron-working including extensive smithing debris, from the former Dales factory site at Mill Street on the flood plain of the Lugg north of the medieval Leominster priory (Shoesmith 2003).

Characterising the Kenchester settlement

History, organisation and buildings

Kenchester (traditionally believed to be the *Magnis* of Iter XII of the Antonine Itinerary; Rivet and Smith 1979, 173–5) developed at a strategically important location between the Iron Age hilltop fort at Credenhill and the River Wye. It was noted above that, placed as it is halfway between known forts to the east and west at Canon Frome and at Clyro, it seems likely that there was a fort somewhere in the close vicinity of, if not actually underneath, the walled town. A settlement certainly grew up here, around the crossroads of the presumed military road from the Gloucester into the upper Wye valley with that linking Caerleon and Chester.

In the period before the apparently mid-second-century walls were built, the settlement extended around 750 m to the west of this crossroads and some 450 m at least to the east. Most of the known early deposits were ranged along this street, although individual pits containing first-century pottery were located some way back from it. The eccentric orientation of the buildings and their associated alleyways leading back northwards from the frontage of the main street,

which are angled slightly north-eastwards, is curious. This, combined with evidence for the build of the main street to the west over early second-century deposits, has been cited to suggest that an earlier alignment of the streets of the settlement took its cue from the road running north-eastwards from the original cross-roads (Wilmott 1980, 121–3).

A sometimes thick burnt deposit was intercepted in several places, both along the main street and in the centre of the later walled area. The latest datable finds in this deposit were said to be of Antonine date. This could represent the destruction by fire of significant parts of the settlement in the mid-second century, and may have been the pretext for a substantial rebuilding and re-orientation of streets in place by around AD 180. If so, this revamping of the settlement could also correlate broadly with the building of the earthwork defences comprising an earthen rampart marking out a hexagonal area 450 m in maximum east–west length by 300 m maximum north–south extent. The presumed earth and timber bank was fronted by a V-shaped ditch, also built over burning deposits that contained Antonine-period finds, and dated to c. AD 150 (Wilmott 1980, 123).

It is likely, in light of this re-organisation, that streets and alleys visible from the air from the air as parch-marks (cf. Richardson and Musson 2004, 38) are mostly post-AD 150 creations (although some may be later: see below). Besides the main street, another seven or eight side-streets are visible, with possibly as many as another 20 alley-ways. Two of the streets meet the main street at right-angles, creating another cross-roads, this time at the exact centre of the walled town. This key junction has been suggested as having been part of a deliberate reorganisation of space within the walls when these were first put in place (Wilmott 1980, 121–3) although there is as yet no firm evidence to confirm this.

The central junction of streets was uncovered in Jack and Hayter's 1924–25 explorations, and at least close to the cross-roads all four streets were of equivalent width. It is possible therefore that this was intended as a civic focus for the town. The northwards-trending street is traceable over half the distance (130 m) from the cross-roads to the north wall at this point. Hereabouts the site of a gate is indicated on Stukeley's 1721 plan of the town (although a perhaps more likely location for this gate would be where a parallel street some 80 m to

the west of the cross-roads clearly extends as far as the wall, at a point where the latter makes a subtle change of direction). The invisibility of this gate (if indeed it ever existed) more recently could have been the result of late blocking, but if so there are no indications of a road running north from it.

Meanwhile, halfway to the southernmost extremity of the southern defences, the southwards-trending street turns through 45 degrees to continue south-eastwards towards approximately the position of another gate shown on Stukeley's plan. (Anyone tempted automatically to dismiss Stukeley's representations of antiquities on such plans as fictitious embellishments should perhaps acquaint themselves with the story of the long-dismissed 'western avenue' at the Avebury Neolithic henge complex in Wiltshire.) It is clear from the aerial photographic record that, in the later phases at least, the defences continue across the position of any gate such as may once have existed here. Be that as it may, this street then meets an intra-mural street that continues eastwards to meet the main street only 20 m west of the east gate. The apparent eccentricity of routing another street running south then south-eastwards towards the southern defences from a point again some 80 m east of the west gate can be explained by the idea that it too linked onto the westwards course of the same intra-mural street.

That there was considerable demolition in the mid-fourth century is indicated by the refurbishment of the defences with the addition of a stone wall built into the front of the earthen bank (Heys and Thomas 1962). As well as the milestone already mentioned, fragments of worked stone were found embedded within the foundations of this wall, which was built of squared blocks of sandstone in exactly the manner of the standing walls at Caerwent.

This wall was fitted out with interval towers that were still visible to Leland in 1550, who described them as 'turrets' (Jack and Hayter 1926, 21). Excavations at the west gate have indicated that this structure was of the same build, with a double carriageway and flanking bastions, and could be dated to around AD 350. A levelling deposit found either side of the main road in what had by then become the eastern suburb of the town outside the east gate (see below) dates from exactly this period, and it seems likely that many of the structures within the walls uncovered by Jack and Hayter were

also rebuilt at this time. The presence of re-used altars in one of the buildings fronting the main road immediately within the east gate indicates a likely mid-fourth-century date for the rebuilding of this structure also (Wilmott 1980, 126). What this amounts to is evidence for a systematic rebuilding a century and a half on from the previous one, and this suggests that, rather than a response to a catastrophe, each rebuilding was indicative of a deliberate renewal of the town under a strong and co-ordinated central civic authority, eager to project its identity through outward display and investment in its main expression of corporate identity, the town wall.

The excavations carried out early in the twentieth century (Jack and Hayter 1917; 1926) were focused mostly upon the north-eastern quarter of the town. In 1912, however, five narrow trenches totalling 400 m in length were dug mostly to the north-west of the central cross-roads (that is, in the north-west quadrant of the town), although one trench 150 m in length cut obliquely across the main east-west road. As might be supposed, these trenches cut through several structures, randomly intercepting features such as stone-flagged floors in two separate locations, an urn presumed to be containing ashes, and, to the south of the main road, a furnace and two altars standing upright (Jack and Hayter 1917). In 1913, a more intensive series of trenches were cut, this time following wall-lines, in the area immediately within the east gate, to the north of the main road. This exercise uncovered the remains of five buildings parallel to one another, aligned obliquely onto the north side of the road, and parts of eight structures behind this. The incomplete plans of these buildings as recorded were no doubt due to the robbing of stone from the site which reached its peak following the clearance of standing remains in 1818.



Figure 5.10 Fragment of mosaic pavement from the centre of Kenchester. This small area of paving was among several pieces donated to Hereford Museum by Dean Merewether following his 'excavations' close to the main road through the settlement in 1840–42 (Photograph: Adam Stanford; courtesy of Hereford Museum)

Two further seasons of work took place in 1924 and 1925 (Jack and Hayter 1926). Although the techniques of excavation had not markedly improved, there was an attempt to uncover more complete plans of at least three of the twelve or so structures intercepted by the fifty or more relatively short trenches (as estimated from the published aerial photographs) cut on all sides of the central cross-roads. The plan of much of a single large building complex approximately 60 m by 30 m in extent and oriented north-west to south-east was uncovered around 30 m north of the main road, but ten of the other eleven buildings were located either adjacent to the main road (eight structures) or the road to the south (two).

While a full account of the findings of these extensive excavations undertaken between 1912 and 1925 is beyond the scope of this chapter, some generalisations can be made. Firstly, the excavations established clearly the commercial nature of the main thoroughfare. Structures fronting onto this road were of a 'strip' character, of elongated form and extending back some way from the frontage. In at least seven cases both north and south of the road, rows of 'morticed stones' represent the bases for individual squared timber uprights

supporting porticos or verandas along the frontage, presumably providing covered access into shops. In four cases, rectangular areas paved with large stone slabs situated directly behind the frontages can be interpreted as hard-wearing shop floors. In rooms in the rear ranges of at least two of these strip buildings, mosaic floors had been laid, presumably reflecting the material success of the merchants, who nonetheless remained living 'over the shop'. In another such building, the creation of two hypocaust-based underfloor heating systems suggests further refinements.

One building close to the street frontage 50 m east of the cross-roads had no fewer than five rooms with concrete floors, at least one of which had been replaced three times. Below the latest floor was a level comprised almost entirely of collapsed yellow-painted wall plaster bearing designs both in, and defining, rectangular panels picked out in red and green, with a blue-spotted border imitating marble (Jack and Hayter 1926, 23–4; Hayter 1926, 28–31). Coins from the floor laid over this collapsed material indicated a probable build date of AD 265–73 (Hayter 1926, 29).

The building complex to the north-west of the main cross-roads had rooms with concrete (*opus signinum*) floors, in one case apparently ranged around a central courtyard 9 m square, which may itself have been surfaced with a thin layer of cement (Jack and Hayter 1926, 25). A raised area along an adjacent corridor was thought to represent the location of a household shrine. This complex has been interpreted as a winged-corridor house with an initial construction date sometime after AD 165–90 (Wilmott 1980, 125–6).

One of the buildings that was partly uncovered in 1913 and was located 60 m back from the frontage north-west of the east gate, close to the north-east angle of the defences, contained a modest bath-suite. A larger baths complex just to the south-east, and in the same location where until around 1820 there was an upstanding piece of masonry of at least eighteen courses of squared stonework containing a large niched recess (carefully drawn by Stukeley in 1721 and described by him as 'The Chair'), included a bath 2.13 m square fed by lead pipes, and a massively built drain (Wilmott 1980, 126). These structures, the forms of which betoken civic investment, possibly represent either public baths, or those belonging to a *mansio* (*ibid*).

The two mosaic floors that were found *in situ*, one of which was 7

m square, were again of the *Corinium* ‘Saltire School’, but the early ‘excavations’ by Dean Merewether in 1840–42 had apparently uncovered mosaics with ‘devices of fish and sea-horses’, which suggests that the work of the Durotrigian (Dorset/Somerset) workshops may also have been represented (Walters 1908, 179; Cosh and Neal 2010, 298–303; [Figure 5.10](#)). The massive quantities of ‘small finds’ from the site include all the forms, such as imported tableware, that would be expected at such a place. Among the rarer finds were two oculists’ stamps, one of which was found during the early ‘investigations’ by Dean Merewether. The inscriptions on each of the four ‘active’ faces of the stamp identify both the name of the practitioner (Tiberius Vindacus Ariovistus, probably from one of the German provinces), and the salves being made (including those made from ‘anicetum’ and ‘nardinium’). The finds indicate the specialist nature of some of the services provided here, even if the oculist himself was an itinerant (Walters 1908, 181).

The eastern ‘extra-mural’ area and economic activity

The work carried out in 2010 immediately to the east of Magna Castra Farm at Kenchester connected with the Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme has produced many insights into the history of the settlement both before and after the building of the walls. This area was previously thought to have been an eastern ‘suburb’ of Kenchester, and it is certainly the case that at least one cemetery is known (and was confirmed by the recent work) to be located to the east of the road striking north-east from the cross-roads. However, what has emerged from the recent work is that from the outset, this area was always an integral part of the settlement although after the later second century it was excluded from the ‘upper’ area to the west of the cross-roads.

Settlement activity began on both sides of the main east–west road east of the cross-roads not long after that road was built in the mid- to late first century AD. To the north of the road, the Romano-British sequence began with a boundary ditch some distance to the north of the road and roughly parallel with it; this contained evidence for leather-working nearby (Webster 2011, 17). This was followed by substantial traces of iron-working from a site also close by, featuring a series of large pits and wells partially filled with industrial debris and

sealed with substantial amounts of domestic refuse in the early second century.

Northwards from this, two outlying burials from the cemetery were found; these were truncated by later structures (for details of the burials, see below). To the south, adjacent to the Roman road, a substantial building, of which at least the ground storey was built in stone, was constructed during the later second century on a carefully prepared foundation supported by wooden piles. In the following century this building was swept away and a substantial levelling deposit comprising domestic refuse, industrial waste and quarried soil was spread over the whole area. On this base a new, well-founded road 4 m wide was built at right-angles to the main road over the rubble spread, but it is not clear what (if any) fourth-century buildings were constructed on either side of this route.

Some 30 m further north, a large ditch was cut running north-west to south-east; this appears to have demarcated the northern limit to settlement from the third century onwards. Immediately south of this ditch a carefully prepared rubble foundation was built to support a timber-framed building oriented east-west and at least 23 m long. This featured a well-worn paved entrance on its south side and appears to have been flanked by a building to its west, possibly framing a yard ([Figure 5.11](#)).

To the south of the main Roman road, but adjacent to and parallel with it, a large aisled building was constructed late in the first century. The material from pits associated with the use of this building produced much evidence for crop processing and flour production, and ovens indicate that it was used both for grain storage and for baking bread. Intriguingly, this approximates closely to the earliest Romano-British structures ('Phase 2') at Field Barn Farm only 400 m to the east, also on the south side of the road. Here, a three-storey building supported by buttresses was associated with seven large millstones from a mechanical mill (worn, but apparently in storage) and a constricted stream. This co-incidence prompted the suggestion (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 72) that there was a watermill nearby, and that the structure was a granary. More remarkably still, these milling and bakery facilities were both burnt down towards the end of the second century, perhaps around AD 180. This could be interpreted as resulting from accidental fires that inevitably occur

with such volatile sites, and there is certainly no indication that neighbouring buildings were destroyed at the same time. There is, however, as previously noted, some evidence for a layer of burning to the west, within the later walled area, that was said to contain Antonine-period pottery (Wilmott 1980).

In any case, the aisled building was replaced not long afterwards, in the late second or early third century, by another 'bakery and grain-processing' open-sided aisled building (Webster 2011). This new building was a massive structure of at least five bays, oriented north-south at right-angles to the main road. It was refurbished a number of times and entirely rebuilt at least once. It was demolished in the late third century and a narrow paved street was built at an angle to the main road, crossing just beyond its former limit. To the south of this street, a series of very small, light, densely clustered timber buildings was built, each furnished with a small paved threshold or recess off the road. One suggestion for these is that they were small retail 'booths' in the manner of a Near Eastern 'souk', and one possible reason that the street was angled southwards off the (quite narrow) main approach road was to entice potential customers thither (Jon Webster, pers. comm.). Nor did these structures last long, because the levelling deposit found to the north of the road was also laid across this area. By the beginning of the fourth century a stone-lined well had been cut through this part of the site, and this, together with a series of pits cut and re-cut nearby appear to mark the turning over of this area to tannery uses. (The tentative nature of this summary should be emphasised. Further analysis, for instance of ceramic chronologies, for a full report currently in preparation may well qualify or refine the dates concerned: Webster forthcoming.)

The purpose of this extended discussion of the tentative conclusions that can be drawn from this recent work is to emphasise both the commercial and the industrial character of Kenchester and its role as a market and production centre throughout its history, regardless of its administrative role. The work to the south of the main road also uncovered a T-junction between a 'side road' running north-south and another east-west road nearly 100 m south of the main road. This suggests that parts of the settlement were planned from an early date, and continued to develop after the walls were in place, although the nature of the activity in this southernmost area, south-

east of the east gate, is yet to be established.



Figure 5.11 The eastern suburbs of Kenchester, near Magna Castra Farm. Excavations by Worcestershire Archaeology in 2010 north and south of the Roman road entering Kenchester from the east. The dumper truck stands next to the former road (now marked by the nearer hedgerow), and in the foreground a side-road and industrial areas are being investigated (Photograph: Keith Ray)

Administrative functions and status

The minor status of *Magnis* (Kenchester) as a nonetheless walled settlement is well- established. This has been seen as evinced in the apparently haphazard planning of streets and buildings, in the unusual (but by no means unique) eccentricity of plan of the walled area, and above all, in the small size of the area contained within the walls (22 acres; c. 9 ha). Despite the creation of a circuit of defensive earthworks, and the subsequent building of a wall in stone and the addition of bastions and bastioned gateways, it never appears formally to have had a legal status greater than that of a village (White 2007, 101).

That Kenchester nonetheless served as a local market centre from its beginning in the period immediately following the Roman Conquest is highly likely, and that it served a local administrative

purpose seems probable. There are no unambiguously public buildings known, although it has been suggested that, given the presence of hypocaust-heated rooms and a bath-house among the inferentially late buildings just within the east gate, and a possible baths-suite and drain reported earlier (Jack and Hayter excavations: 1916, 23–9, plates 56 and 57; and Wilmott 1980, 126), this could be the site of a government guest house, or *mansio*. Another candidate for such an establishment (but so far known only from aerial photographs) is a building complex in the southern part of the town, built around a courtyard on higher ground. Alternatively, apparently standing as it does within its own enclosure tucked into the southern angle of the defences, and served by a distinct road which may lead to one of the gates shown on Stukeley's plan of the site (as it was in 1721), might this courtyard complex actually have served as the administrative centre for the whole settlement and (or) region?

Whatever the early status of Kenchester administratively (and Rivet's comment about a *pagus* is no doubt relevant here), the apparently deliberate changes in its form from the late second century onwards do seem likely to coincide with an elevation of the status of the town to a *civitas* capital (Wilmott 1980; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 70–6). This is where the milestone dug up in 1795 or 1796 from the foundations of the north wall of the town becomes highly relevant (Walters 1908, 181). The first three lines of the inscription ([Figure 5.12](#), Roman milestone in Hereford Museum) are dedicated to 'IMPC–MAR.AVR–NVMORIAN–O–RPCD', or, '*Imp(eratori) C(aesari) Mar(co) Aur(elio) Numorian(o)*', the Emperor Numerian (AD 283–84). The final line clearly bears the letters 'R P C D'. There seems little reason to doubt Professor Francis Haverfield's suggestion, accepted by Collingwood and Wright, that these letters are an abbreviation of *Res Publica Civitas Dobunnorum* (Collingwood and Wright 1965, 703, RIB I, 2250).

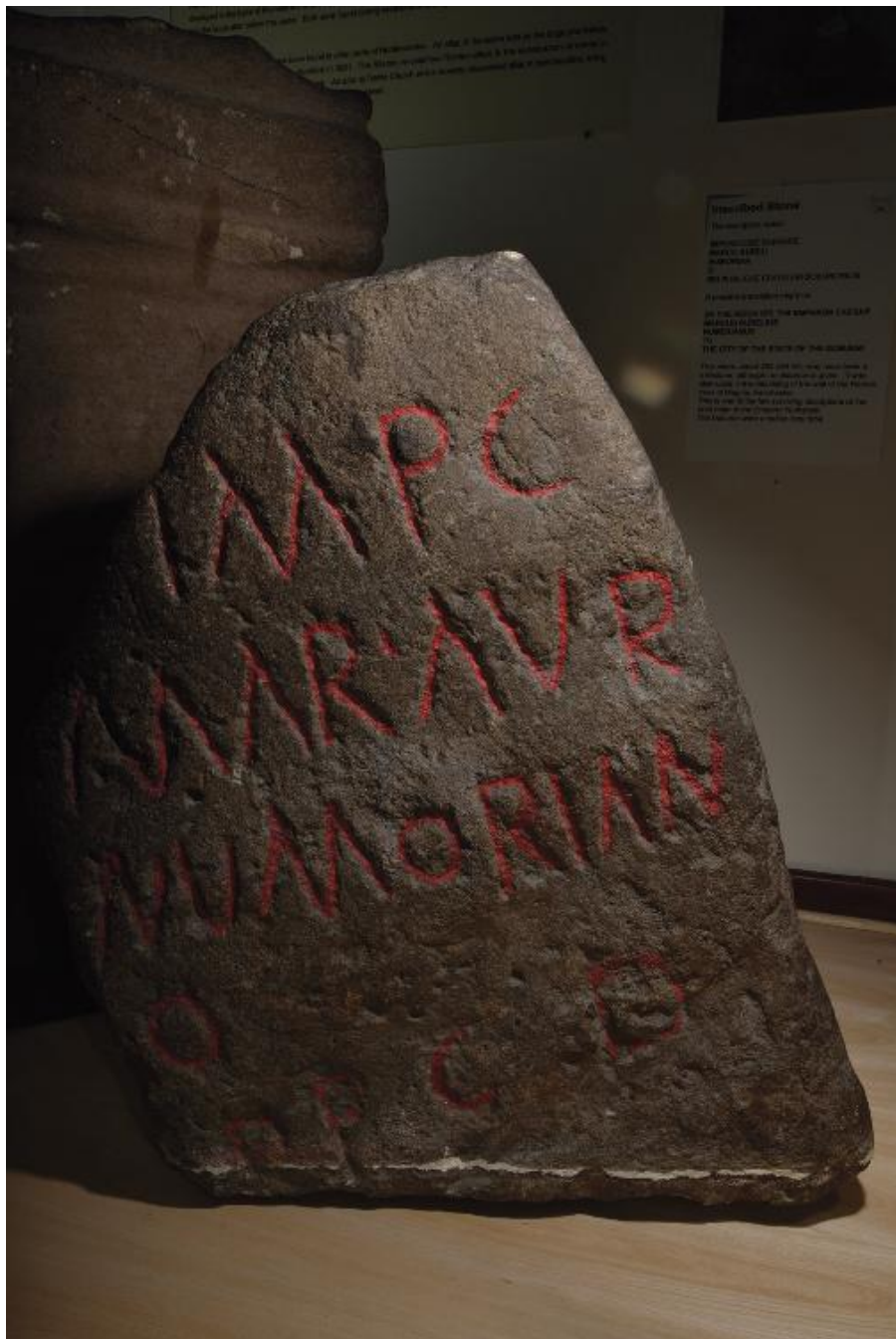


Figure 5.12 Roman milestone found re-used in Kenchester town wall, one of only a handful of inscriptions on stone known from Roman Herefordshire. The rustic nature of the lettering on this inscription is typical of the period (Photograph: Adam Stanford; courtesy of Hereford Museum)

Putting together this inscription with the new evidence for extensive levelling and rebuilding at exactly this time, it is now reasonable to suggest that this was precisely the time when the advance of an erstwhile peripheral market centre to a more formally recognised status occurred. As was pointed out by Tony Wilmott some while ago (1980, 128), this correlates with the likely raising of other towns such as *Lindinis* (Ilchester) in Somerset to the status of cantonal capitals, and ‘it is perhaps feasible that this might have occurred during the Diocletianic reforms when the Dobunnic capital of Cirencester (*Corinium Dobunnorum*) became the administrative centre of (the newly established province of) Britannia Prima’ (Wilmot 1980, 128).

This latter province, it has been suggested, included within its geographical area the major (planned) towns of Gloucester (although this had an independent status as a *colonia*), Wroxeter, Dorchester, Caerleon, Caerwent, and Exeter, and smaller or more specialised towns including Carmarthen, Ilchester, Bath, Alcester, Worcester and (probably) Wall in Staffordshire (White 2007, 100–1). *Deva* (Chester) and Carlisle, each of which had been remote from the former single cantonal capital, were probably also elevated alongside Kenchester and Ilchester within this province (*ibid*). As such, *Magnis* would have achieved an administrative, if not technically legal, status as a regional ‘capital’, but would still have been dependent upon its ‘mother’ capital at *Corinium*.

Later history

The later history of Kenchester is known mainly from excavations at the west gate. This began as a monumental structure built around AD 350 with two carriageways, very much like those known from Caerwent. Like Caerwent too, the wall fronting the earlier earthen defences that was added at this time had prominent bastions, although the number of these that once existed at Kenchester is unknown. The defensive ditch beyond the wall was widened at this time, again like Caerwent, and in line with the form of the defences of the coastal forts such as that built at Cardiff.

Sometime in the very late fourth century, or more probably in the early fifth century, the southern carriageway was blocked. However, the passage left open was re-surfaced and subsequently drains were

put in, suggesting that it remained in use for some while afterwards. This has led some to postulate a substantial sub-Roman community in existence here and ‘something worth defending’ well into the fifth century (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 76).

Temples, shrines, and the ‘sacralisation’ of Iron Age sites

Temples in the landscape

Religion has frequently been treated as a ‘residual’ or ancillary category in the archaeology of Roman Britain. However, so to marginalise religious practice is to misunderstand the centrality of the unseen in the lives of ‘Romanised’ Britons across the three and a half centuries of Roman Imperial rule (Henig 1984). The evidence is nonetheless often at best vestigial – at least in part because shrines and casual cult locations are rarely identified through pot-scatters in ploughed fields or from aerial photographs.

Besides the new inscription evidence for a temple of Jupiter and the Imperial cult in association either with the fort or *mansio* at Leintwardine, there are some further indications of the presence of temples in the county. For instance, there have been finds indicative of a temple on a hilltop at Stretton Grandison (Walters 1908, 195). Again (and perhaps not surprisingly) this is in close proximity to a roadside settlement. There is also a suggested temple at *Ariconium* (Jackson, 2002). The altars at Hereford itself represent a remarkable concentration of shrine or temple furniture, and it has been suggested therefore that there was some kind of ritual focus near the crossing of the River Wye here (Shoesmith 1980). Meanwhile, the alleged *nymphaeum* at New Weir, Kenchester, might represent a further temple, in this case built in close proximity to a villa, exactly as at Chedworth near Cirencester (Esmonde Cleary 2013, 95–103; [Figure 5.13](#)).

A find that has been dismissed as indicative of the existence of a shrine or temple was the figure of Mercury found at Staunton-on-Arrow. This stone carving was found during the clearing of a rockery at the vicarage and it is possible that it had been imported into the site by the rector, a known local antiquary (Painter 1967). This may be the case, but other finds of Romano-British pottery have been made

nearby, and the current residents also say that they have found Roman coins in the garden in recent years (P. White, pers. comm.).

The enigmatic structure discovered at The Prospect, Ross-on-Wye, in 2009 can, on present evidence, perhaps best be thought of as part of a complex with strong religious connotations. Following late first- or early second-century activity of indeterminate nature, a series of horse burials was interred in a levelled platform that then had a building with a range of rooms inserted in it, oriented north–south parallel with but just back from the edge of the cliff overlooking the River Wye. At the north-eastern corner of this range a 5 m square foundation with walls over a metre thick (and with a circular clay-lined surface, at the centre of which a single wooden upright had existed) may represent the base of a tower of uncertain purpose (Shoesmith and Border Archaeology 2009; Children, Wellicombe and Priestley 2011; see also Ray 2015, fig. 5.29).

Very little evidence for human burials of the Romano-British period has so far come from excavations undertaken to modern standards. Two urns containing cremated bone were found buried in pits close to the late villa at Wellington Quarry (Jackson and Miller 2011). The Stretton Grandison cemetery has already been mentioned, as has one of the two cemeteries outside the east gate at Kenchester. Two inhumations of women in wooden ‘coffins’ were found in the 2010 excavations just to the east of Kenchester. One particularly robust, and in her lifetime hard-working, person appears to have been placed in a re-used wooden chest bound by metal straps, but with the customary recess for libations at one side of the grave (Webster 2010, 17). A ditch nearby seems to have been associated with these burials and linked westwards to an enclosure apparently containing a mausoleum (the outline of which was traced by geophysical survey). A similarly sized structure, about 4 m square, has been observed as a cropmark in a location that has also produced squared ashlar blocks immediately adjacent to the same Roman road several miles to the north near Kingsland (Musson and Ray 2007; [Figure 5.6](#), above).

In 2008, the ditch of an enclosure subjected to sample excavation near Blakemere in the Wye valley west of Hereford was found to contain an assemblage of finds characteristic of feasting perhaps linked to funerary activity. This included a fragment of a rare pale blue glass vase found elsewhere to have contained cremations, and

several large sherds from storage jars. An extensive assemblage of animal bone representing cuts of meat were purposefully deposited along the ditches flanking a north-facing entrance into the enclosure (the entrance itself had been deliberately 'skewed') and had been then buried after a short period of exposure. Nearby, a pit filled with pyre debris was revealed.

The evidence for less-formal worship is thinner still; one example may be the two carved stone heads that were found in the 1980s near Stretton Grandison during drainage works on the River Frome (O'Donnell 1986).

The presence of shrines

Perhaps the most remarkable indications of religious ritual and practice during the Roman period in Herefordshire come from an abandoned hillfort. Croft Ambrey, north of Leominster, is without doubt Herefordshire's most complex Iron Age hillfort. However, Stanford's excavations in the 1960s added a further dimension relating to activity there long after the site was abandoned (Stanford 1974). Stanford saw this abandonment as having taken place following the Roman Conquest, but on the evidence of the brooch sequence as noted earlier, the site had long since become deserted (Haselgrove 1997).

It seems very likely that Stanford misinterpreted the nature of the southern area of the hillfort at Croft Ambrey, considering it an annexe rather than an integral part of the fort from its inception (Ray and Hoverd 2003, 23–5; see also Field and Smith 2008). In this area, he excavated part of one of four large circular levelled areas, together with an associated mound that was found to have an intriguing developmental history (Stanford 1974, 132–43). The sequence included, in the early Roman period, a sub-circular terrace with a carefully laid red clay 'floor' upon which many ceremonies appear to have taken place. Among the finds associated with this surface were pieces of cremated animal bone and sherds from at least 100 pots comprising mainly local coarse-wares but also a (locally) sizeable assemblage of samian ware spanning the period AD 70–150.

Subsequently, the structure was transformed through the creation of a mound by the deliberate laying of a stone kerb around three sides, producing a D-shaped plan. A hearth and an associated accumulation of ash, charcoal and clay deposits within the kerb

produced many finds, including pins and brooches apparently deposited as votive offerings. This material all dated to the Romano-British period, and the depth of the sequence indicates that the site was probably a shrine in use over a considerable time-span. Stanford was sufficiently impressed by its shrine-like qualities that he dubbed the feature the 'Sanctuary Mound', but it should be noted that Dalwood and Waller (1992) suggested it was a pillow-mound, and Field and Smith (2008) suggest that, at best, it was a domestic site with a mound over it.

Since the publication of Stanford's Croft Ambrey report, it appears to have been assumed that this shrine was an isolated feature, representing occasional visits to the site by a displaced population. The archaeological survey carried out across the Croft Estate in 2001–02 included a detailed study of the fort (Ray and Hoverd 2003). As a result, two further areas apparently featuring such shrine sites were noted. One of these comprised a remarkable row of ten or more earthwork features arranged in a line and extending for 150 m along the inside lip of the quarry ditch for the highest rampart (between Stanford's excavation areas F and J: 1974, figure 1). These features include a cigar-shaped mound with flanking ditches descending the slope at an eccentric angle; two squared earthen platforms, one of which projects over the lip of the quarry ditch at an oblique angle; three circular or semi-circular scoops; one set of straight narrow banks enclosing three sides of an open area approximately 30 m square ranged down the slope; and one oval mound containing stones. During the 2001–02 survey, pieces of calcined bone were retrieved from mole-heaps down-slope from the latter mound and other such heaps across one of the squared platforms produced pieces of brick or tile, and mortar.

Both Dalwood (1992) and Field and Smith (2008) have interpreted these features as pillow-mounds or nineteenth-century landscaping features, basing their view upon the 'sharp' character of the earthworks. Were it not the case that there are four pillow-mounds (three within the 'annexe' and a fourth straddling a bank between two of the outer circuits of ditch on the western side of the fort – and recognised first only in 2002 (Ray and Hoverd 2004), then this might have been regarded as plausible. But such a collection of eccentric putative-pillow mounds in this context appears very odd. It is of

interest that of the three pieces of Romano-British pottery from Stanford's excavations elsewhere within the fort, two were recovered from Site F immediately adjacent to the western end of this row of putative 'shrine' features (Stanford 1974, 155; *contra* Field and Smith 2008). Another area, to the north of the south-west gate, comprised a further set of three earthen banks enclosing an area approximately 20 m square. It is of interest that both such earthworks mirror the three-sided enclosure of an area defined by kerbing at Stanford's 'Sanctuary Mound'.

One of the most prominent of these features includes a length of bank that rises from the infilled quarry-ditch, then turns a right angle to run along the lip of that ditch, and then turns again to descend into the quarry-ditch, such that it encloses three sides of a rectangle, the 'fourth' side of which comprises a rectangular terrace immediately above the ditch. The 2008 survey traced a bank performing the same manoeuvre, but in reverse, further west along the quarry-ditch, with the three earthwork 'sides' being pendant from the scarp above. Yet another such enclosure has long been known, with banks forming a 'pendant' rectangle below a prominent scarp just to the north of the south-west entrance to the fort. This, too, is located in an area with several finds of Romano-British pottery (regarded by Field and Smith as evidence for 'settlement' of this period), but was again dismissed by them as a 'recent' feature on account of the prominence of the earthworks. An equally 'sharp' profile to the earthworks of a rectangular enclosure on Garway Hill had also been regarded by several observers as of 'recent' origin, perhaps a stock-enclosure. This was found upon excavation in 2008 to have been of entirely Iron Age construction and use (Atkinson 2009).



Figure 5.13 The alleged 'nymphaeum' at The Weir, Kenchester. Viewed here from the north-east, the 'restored' multangular cistern can be compared with a similarly enigmatic structure at Chedworth in the Cotswolds (Photograph: Keith Ray)

What this apparent re-use of Croft Ambrey indicates is not simply a phenomenon like the alleged 'pagan revival' that led to hillforts such as Maiden Castle in Dorset having temples placed inside them. Rather, if these structures are indeed all, or mostly, of Romano-British origin, this could represent a wholesale 'sacralisation' of a former major Iron Age centre that must itself have been regarded as an ancestral site by this time. Nor are the Croft Ambrey shrines necessarily the only sites with religious overtones that were located within hillforts. That other former shrines may have been existed and were subsequently Christianised is hinted at by the situation at Walterstone Camp in the Monnow valley in the south-west of the county. Here a definite 'annexe' area to the north of the main enclosure later contained a chapel dedicated to St Ailbert (Weddell 2000). Also, within Midsummer Hill fort on the extreme eastern edge of the county, a rectangular east-west foundation likely to represent a small stone chapel is located at the highest point of the western summit. Wall Hills fort, just to the west of nearby Ledbury, has a prominent earthwork flanking the north entrance to the outer enclosure. On a plan made in the late nineteenth century, this is identified as 'the

churchyard' (Ray 2011).

That shrines such as those at Croft Ambrey did not only exist within hillforts is suggested by the excavation of a circular mound located on a ridge near Peterchurch (Marshall 1933). In reviewing this site, Stanford (1974, 140) noted that it also featured burnt deposits within the mound and upon the ground surface below it, and that the finds included sherds of what we would nowadays term Severn Valley ware.

Roman Christian Herefordshire?

The scant evidence for Christianity in the county has been reviewed recently (Ray 2001). A strap-end found by chance at Kenchester conforms to a type well-established as having Christian connotations (*ibid*, 106; Mawer 1995, 124), but it also has administrative connotations (see below). Meanwhile, at the Magna Castra Farm site just east of Kenchester, a Roman lead tank may have been one of a series that included examples with chi-rho symbols on them, potentially used as baptismal fonts (Mawer 1995; see also Todd 2007; Henig 2008).

At Upton Bishop, near Ross-on-Wye, the building of a vestry in the nineteenth century resulted in the uncovering of medieval carved stones, and an enigmatic fragment of what has been interpreted as a Roman tombstone. It has been suggested that the two figures in adjacent niches on this stone may be portrayals of early Christians at prayer, given the similarity of the treatment of vestments between the Upton Bishop figures and the well-known Lullingstone frieze figures (Ray 2001). However, more recent work on the style of the carving suggests either that it is a Romanesque piece (Henig 1993, 79), or that it is late Saxon in origin (Hunt 2009; see also, Ray 2006).

Part of the reason that the Upton Bishop stone was thought possibly to be significant to the story of Christianity in Roman Herefordshire was that the best evidence for organised Christian communities comes from just this area. This is in the documented existence of Dubricius, as a bishop of the early church in the *Ariconium*/Archenfield area, just to the south of Upton Bishop.

The end of Roman Herefordshire

The clearest piece of evidence for the final decades of 'Roman Britain' in Herefordshire is the late blocking of the north carriageway of the west gate of Kenchester (Wilmott 1980). Apart from this, there has until recently been little indication of activity extending beyond the mid- to late fourth century in the county. Recent studies of the material from civilian settlements at Leintwardine, Blackwardine and *Ariconium* has added little to this picture (Brown 1990; 1998; Jackson 2000).

However, in 2007 some graphic detail was revealed from among the burials examined near Stretton Grandison. Here, a woman probably in her early twenties was found upon close examination to have cut-marks indicative of trauma. This in itself would have excited little comment, but the radiocarbon determinations indicated a date in the late fifth century for this burial. While the trauma indicated by this particular death could reflect a local and familial tragedy, it may also provide a hint of a more martial trend. This is because it is precisely this period when other evidence points to a settlement of central Herefordshire by Anglian communities pushing westwards from the direction of the Malverns.

Climate and landscape change

The subject of the climate and vegetation of regions of Roman Britain is often discussed at the beginning of a chapter such as this. As such, it is often regarded as a 'backdrop' for a reconstruction of the contemporary environment. However, close study of the development of river-valleys has considerable further potential to enable the gauging of environment change and its impacts on human activity.

This has been looked at in the recent Arrow Valley project, by a team from the University of Wales at Aberystwyth (Macklin *et al.* 2003). One phenomenon noted in the study that was of particular interest was the frequency with which Romano-British material was associated with flooding and bank erosion events. Another was variability in sediment deposition. A high point traced in the depositional regime appears to have been *c.* AD 200.

This is particularly noteworthy for its apparent correlation with the archaeological evidence from the field system excavated in 2003 at Middle Field, Leen Farm, Pembridge (White 2003). Here it seems that there was a marked intensification of land division (and perhaps

therefore also of arable cultivation) at exactly the same period – perhaps causing greater run-off from the fields concerned into the nearby river.

Conclusion

The future uncovering of the character of ‘Roman Herefordshire’

Rather than summarise the preceding sections, this conclusion will focus on the future, both the more immediate and the more distant. On the face of it, Herefordshire is not an obvious place in which to consider doing research into Roman Britain. The settlement at Kenchester, for instance, appears strikingly anomalous within the emerging picture of urbanisation. The evidence presented here demonstrates that Kenchester, certainly in reference to its highly developed immediate hinterland, cannot easily be fitted into a generic framework, within a category such as ‘walled village’.

However, the importance of Herefordshire within the Roman world may lie in the fact that it was neither wholly ‘Romano-British’ nor wholly ‘British’. As such, it contained areas that were closely linked into the ‘political geography’ of the province (especially in the multi-provincised later Roman period), as well as areas that remained stubbornly ‘Iron Age’ in character throughout the four centuries concerned. Moreover, it was in this area that one of the few definable post-Roman and essentially rural Christian bishoprics emerged, headed by the cleric ‘Dubricius’. In this way a key element of the cultural nexus of western Britain in the following six centuries was (with the additional complication of the advent of the Normans) forged in this region.

The future will see further development projects, particularly in the environs of Hereford and Leominster, that may throw more light on the growth of these places in Roman times. It can, moreover, be anticipated that further features of the Romano-British landscape of the lower Lugg valley will emerge as a result of work associated with minerals extraction not only at Wellington Quarry, but also at the Moreton-on-Lugg depot close by.

In a completely different direction, the extension of the Portable Antiquities Scheme to Herefordshire and Shropshire, with a Finds

Liaison Officer based at Ludlow Museum, has already increased significantly the reporting of (particularly) metalwork finds. Further new discoveries will be made as a result of the sustained and new programmes of survey now underway in the county, and some of these finds will no doubt be attributable to the Roman period. These surveys include sustained aerial archaeological reconnaissance survey. For the latter, given at least one summer in which optimal conditions prevail for a month or more, it might also be possible to locate some of the elusive forts and marching camps.

What is not planned on any scale, but would be an important contribution to research into the economic place of the Wye valley and adjacent areas in the Romano-British period, is extended research into the iron-working industry. Perhaps what is needed most, however, is some research into Kenchester itself, provided that it takes in the environs also. In the wider context of Roman Britain, the potential of sites like Kenchester, unburdened by later development, and only 'sampled' by early excavations to a limited extent, is widely appreciated. The form and distribution of later buildings is accessible to some degree from aerial photographic study, and the number of photographs of the site now available makes this a feasible future exercise. However, to achieve a better understanding of the development of the town, and especially of the contribution of timber buildings, will require more investment of effort:

Although every chance needs to be taken to enhance the available data base, the time must now be ripe for a more co-ordinated research approach, particularly at those greenfield sites which afford the opportunity of combining cost-effective, non-invasive surveys with judicious excavations in key areas to elucidate the early plan. The current Wroxeter project and the ongoing work at Silchester and Aldborough offer a useful working model for other sites like Kenchester or Caistor by Norwich.

Burnham, Collis, Dobinson, Haselgrove and Jones 2001, 72.

The defences and walled area of Caistor were purchased by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust as long ago as 1984. The work of exploration of Caistor, in part as a research and community project, has been underway with a programme of excavations taking place since 2009 as a joint venture by the Trust, South Norfolk Council, and

the University of Nottingham (<http://www.caistorromanproject.org/>) and offers a model for a similar project at Kenchester.

Back to the future: aesthetics, Romanitas, and ‘the Roman Wye’

In concluding this review of ‘Herefordshire in Roman Britain’, we should perhaps return again to Rivet and his comment about ‘the low level of romanisation’ in the countryside surrounding Kenchester. Perhaps because the Romano-British small town there is not actually located at a bridging point of the River Wye, the nature of that river and its significance to the people who inhabited the county between AD 100 and AD 400 have apparently escaped notice. Paradoxically, then, it may be along the banks of the Wye that some of the most significant future discoveries will be made, and it is appropriate to consider briefly here, why this should be so.

The ‘villa’ standing upon an artificial terrace overlooking the river at The Weir, Kenchester, has been known since the nineteenth century. However, it was only with the Cotswold Archaeological Trust’s work there in 1994 that its true nature began to emerge. The long-established idea that the surviving buttresses formed bridge supports was proven to be wrong, as was the notion that there was some kind of wharf here. The view was still held by some that there was a ‘landing stage’ at the villa, but the most important conclusion to be drawn from the 1994 work was that here was an extremely unusual kind of riverside structure. The ‘villa’ was built at the foot of a scarp, at a location that was extremely constrained, tucked between the scarp and the river bank ([Figure 5.14](#)).

This necessitated the no doubt expensive construction of a terrace immediately above the river, so why go to all this effort? The answer appears to be to respond adequately to the aesthetic qualities of the site. The terrace was seemingly not built entirely parallel with the river, but projected outwards into it. Rooms were actually contained within the bastions, or extended into them, so presumably there were windows from which it was possible to look out upon the scene below and beyond. The only reason that can be adduced for the deliberate orientation of the structural complex in this way was to create a ‘landscape composition’, whereby the surface and the bend of the river

provided a foreground and the view of the hills by Moccas, and beyond this the Black Mountains, created a background.

Barely a kilometre downstream, another stone-founded building was constructed within its own walled and gated enclosure on an eminence above the river. This enclosure adjoined the course of 'Watling Street West' as it changed alignment after crossing the river and headed south past Madley and towards Abergavenny. The eminence overlooked a further bend in the river (which may have shifted slightly since Roman times), but again instead of the buildings of this complex being built parallel to the line of the river, they had been positioned at an angle both to it and also to the bluff upon which they stood (Ray 2015, fig. 5.28). This orientation served to 'direct' the view from the building such that the highest hill in the area, at Credenhill to the north-east, was in its line of sight.

A long way downstream but still within Herefordshire, the 'prospect tower' found in 2008 at The Prospect, Ross-on-Wye, appears likely to have been linked to a range of buildings that similarly was not aligned parallel to the cliff upon which the complex was sited. Instead this was again angled to face north-eastwards. It is only from this angle that the River Wye can be viewed as it approaches from that direction in a wide loop. The structures here therefore afforded a fine view of the river in the foreground with the high hills of the 'Woolhope Dome' framing the distant prospect.



Figure 5.14 Bastion supporting a rich Roman establishment at The Weir. This structure, 4 m high and built in two stages of fine stonework, is one of what were at least three such buttresses supporting an artificial terrace built to overlook the Wye at this site. Upon excavation, it was found to be part of a larger room with the remains of a patterned mosaic (Photograph: Keith Ray)

What is emerging through the specifics of these locations is a pattern whereby we can deduce the deliberate siting of precisely the kind of ‘Romanised’ buildings not thought by Rivet to be very common in the county to take into account the beauty of the setting in a way reminiscent of the praise for such compositions in writings by the Classical authors. In their own way, these structures are therefore as eloquent of the ‘high culture’ of the elites of Herefordshire as are the mosaics with quotations from Virgil at Low Ham, Somerset, or the complex allusion and Classical portraiture of the central roundel from the mosaic at Hinton St. Mary, Dorset, now in the British Museum.

At least some of the research that takes place well into the future concerning the Roman period in Herefordshire will need to be devoted therefore to examining this particular aesthetic more closely and to weighing its implications for regarding the county as a cultural backwater more generally. Such an endeavour may ultimately contribute to a wider reappraisal of regionality in later Roman Britain, and to a more thorough amplification than possible at present, of

Wheeler's prescient remarks regarding 'Roman Herefordshire' nearly eighty years ago.

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Shropshire in the Roman period

Roger White and Andy Wigley

Introduction

In the two decades since the launch of the research frameworks series, considerable progress has been achieved in progressing our understanding of the resource in Shropshire during the first half of the first millennium AD. Unusually, this progress has not been made through developer-funded projects, although there has been some significant contribution from that quarter, but through the fruition of longer-term research projects, notably the Marches Uplands Survey (MUS), the North-West Wetlands Survey (NWWS), and the Wroxeter Hinterland Project (WHP) (Dinn and Edwards 2004; Leah *et al.* 1998; Gaffney and White 2007; White *et al.* 2013). To these can be added the Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood and Bryant 2005), even though it technically predates the research frameworks project, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme whose contribution to the Historic Environment Record becomes ever more important (see Deacon, this volume). The unintended delay in producing the framework has thus had the fortuitous outcome that we can assess the results of these projects and look afresh at the next stage of research in the county and region, considering these in the light of the concerns and ambitions expressed a decade ago in the original research seminar series.

The aim of this study is to outline our current understanding of the chronological evolution of the Roman period in the county before addressing the resource along thematic lines. This dual approach will ideally highlight where our lacunae lie, among the bright spots of

relatively well-understood sites, periods or themes. The study will then conclude with some suggestions for further research and consider the active management of the resource within the county both to further our understanding of it, and to broaden public awareness and appreciation of the period.

Chronological overview

The Iron Age to Roman transition

In formulating the research design for the Wroxeter Hinterland Project, the project team emphasised that Wroxeter was an ideal place to study the question of Romanisation since it was evident that the preceding period had no sign of incipient Roman influence. Thus the impact of Rome on the landscape and people would be measurable and quantifiable (Gaffney and White 2007, 15–7). In the two decades since, nothing has come to light to change that perception, yet our other argument, that the people of the region were neither impoverished nor backward (*ibid*, 279–86), has received increasing support from the archaeological record. Two discoveries in particular – high-status metalwork and the discovery of a constructed road – highlight that the people of the region were, in their way, as developed as their neighbouring tribes. The first of these includes, in addition to the objects reported by the WHP (*ibid*, 143–5), fragments of gold torcs (Slarke 2009; Reavill 2013), a pair of copper alloy spoons (Reavill 2010; [Figure 6.1](#)), a scabbarded sword (Stead 2013) and a loose scabbard mount (Reavill 2008) that are evidence of an elite in communication with the broad cultural traditions developing in the period. Significantly, however, there is still no clear evidence for contact, direct or mediated, with the Roman World. The second, a metallised road, demonstrates an engineering and technical ability to solve specific problems of communication through the mobilisation of local resources (Malim and Hayes 2010). This last had been attested before the discovery of the road in the existence of the numerous hillforts within the county and the more modern realisation of the extent and density of settlement implied by enclosed settlements that are found thickly scattered across the region (Whimster 1989, 35–65; Wigley 2017b). It is still true that far too few of these have been investigated to have confidence overall about their dating or

development but enough have now been sampled to demonstrate that the basic assumption, that these enclosures are of Iron Age and Roman date, and often both rather than one or other date, is largely true. The discovery of the road thus merely adds another element to our knowledge of the ability of the people in the region to mobilise resources. It is surely evidence too for long-distance trade, although the commodity being traded is not readily apparent. Two suggestions have been made: cattle droving and the transportation of salt (Malim and Hayes 2010, 62–6; White and Wigley 2010, 5). Of course, both might be possible contemporaneously and no doubt others can be added, but it is clear that whatever is being transported is largely invisible archaeologically.



Figure 6.1 A pair of Iron Age copper alloy spoons (HESH-9A4B83) found near Ellesmere (Creative Commons photograph for Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum)

In characterising the pre-Roman period, therefore, we can now recognise a regionally distinctive Iron Age society whose material culture, whilst sharing many similar traits, also differed markedly to those which existed in southern and eastern England, and to which it is often compared. We can also detect some long-term cultural and evidential traits that can inform our understanding of the inter-relationship between Roman and native in the Roman period. This characterisation must perforce be sketchier in the detail, however, since we have so little data to work with from excavated sites.



Figure 6.2 Sharpstone road (Margary 6), looking west to the crest of Sharpstone Hill. The upper surface is the Roman road. The section exposes the Iron Age road and, below it, a gleyed clay horizon within a former shallow bog (Photograph: R. White)

In terms of settlement, the principal identified elements remain enclosures which range from multivallate hillforts enclosing substantial areas and, it is assumed rather than proven, significant populations. The common use of the term hillfort to characterise such settlements, while widely accepted, is not accurate. A significant number are located on relatively low-lying or easily accessible ground, including those that are among the largest of the Shropshire hillforts: Old Oswestry and Wall Camp, Kynnersley (Hughes 1996; Malim and Malim 2010). The better-known hillforts of Caer Caradoc (Church

Stretton), the Wrekin and Bury Ditches, to cite just three, epitomise the concept of hilltop settlement much more precisely. At the other end of the scale are the numerous small, ditched enclosures, often well under 1 ha in area, in three principal variants (square, circular and D-shaped) and with one, two or more ditches (Whimster 1989, 41–3). These are ubiquitous across much of the central Shropshire region on the generally fertile and freely draining soils of the Severn Valley and its tributaries, and from the small quantity of excavated evidence are likely to represent the farmsteads of one or more household groups. Increasingly too there is evidence for associated field systems, whether co-axial, as is suggested by Bassett in the Wroxeter area for instance (Bassett 1990), or defined by pit-alignments as now seems more common in the region. The existence of either, or both, systems asserts that this landscape was already old when the Romans arrived, environmental evidence pointing to mid- to late Bronze Age clearance and settlement of this region (Brown 1990; Wigley 2017a). What is largely missing from this pattern is an unknowable quantity of unenclosed settlement whose existence is inferred only from the large unenclosed settlement on Black Knoll, which also had its own field system (Ainsworth and Donachie 1995). Similarly, the north of Shropshire, at least beyond the pockets of fluvio-glacial sands and gravels, is still a relatively blank canvas in terms of settlement, enclosed or unenclosed, but there has been little research to see if this apparent pattern merely reflects a lack of investigation in the area. What is evident from the existing evidence is the lack of any sign of incipient urbanisation, while we must allow that there is considerable evidence for the sophisticated understanding and exploitation of the landscape and its natural resources.

Of cultural and social patterns, we have a much poorer understanding. One element does seem clear, however. Although there are significant finds of metalwork that demonstrate high-status contacts with peoples beyond the territorial boundaries, there are few signs of access to traded goods across society nor is there much evidence of engagement with what might be considered essentials such as pottery. There appears to be no existing tradition in Shropshire for the manufacture and common domestic use of pottery throughout the Iron Age, the exception being VCP – a form of briquetage used to transport salt from the brine springs of Nantwich,

Middlewich and Northwich in Cheshire, and its analogue in Droitwich to the south (Morris 1985). The occurrence of these containers across the region, in the full spectrum of enclosure sites, argues for extensive exchange networks with an effective and efficient distribution mechanism, perhaps now made visible by the discovery of the Sharpstone road but also demonstrated across western Britain (Figure 6.2). While the lack of domestic pottery seems puzzling in comparison to its ubiquity in the Iron Age in southern England, it should not blind us to the fact that there were alternatives available. The early twentieth-century discovery of a cauldron from the Berth at Baschurch, for example, highlights the use of metal vessels which would otherwise usually have been recycled and thus be invisible to us. Similarly, the bronze-bound leather cup from Beeston Hill, Cheshire (Foster 1993) makes explicit the ancestry of the suspiciously leather-vessel-shaped Severn Valley tankard of the Roman period (see Evans, this volume). Lastly, the wooden vessels and other objects recovered from the Iron Age cistern within Buckbean Pond at Breiddin hillfort, Montgomeryshire, point to the exploitation of the abundant supplies of wood in the region (Britnell and Earwood 1991). Ordinarily, metal, leather and wood vessels will not be recovered or be recoverable archaeologically and we must assume that these formed the mainstay of the Iron Age household in Shropshire.

An abiding issue of the Iron Age is the economic foundation of the people and their region. The existence of field systems might be taken to imply arable agriculture, and this may well be true of much of the freely draining lowland. It is implied, for example, by the settlement pattern detected around Nesscliffe considered in relation to the underlying soil quality (Gaffney and White 2007, 256–7, fig. 6.8). Equally, however, the enclosed area between the settlement's ditches at Collfyrn clearly suggests extensive cattle corralling and this can be argued for other, more lowland sites, as at Sharpstone E, for instance (Britnell 1989; Bain and Evans 2013). The suspicion must be that cattle were a principal foundation of the wealth of the region, a conclusion suggested both by consideration of the long-term history of the region and by low levels of material culture. Livestock, and especially cattle, are the agricultural mainstay of Shropshire throughout much of the historical period. The probability is that this holds true for earlier times as well because the fundamentals of

geology, pedology and climate have not varied greatly over time. Related to this is the cultural observation made above regarding pottery and other consumer goods. It has been established that populations reliant on arable agriculture tend to be greater consumers of cultural artefacts than pastoralists. This is principally because arable crops will produce a surplus that can be readily converted into alternative products, fostering a greater engagement with consumerism (Roymans 1996, 42–88). It is perhaps also in this context that the exchange networks along which the briquetage salt containers moved need to be viewed, since salt is important ingredient in dairying, most notably in cheese making, for the preservation of meat, and the tanning of leather.

Other facets of Iron Age society in the region are more difficult to pin down, even if we can assume they were there. The presence of religious sites, for instance, is hinted at in the deposition of metalwork, such as the cauldron from the Berth, or the pair of spoons found at an enclosure site near Nesscliffe already mentioned. We can also assume that natural places will have had an importance in Iron Age belief systems, even if such sites are virtually impossible to locate or demonstrate to a satisfactory level, although one might observe that Whixall Moss has produced the largest number of bog bodies recorded in the UK (Turner and Penney 1996). Similarly, we can surmise that some level of exploitation of mineral resources was taking place: iron, copper and (presumably) lead mining. Evidence for bronze working has been found within Llanymynech hillfort on the Shropshire/Montgomeryshire border, which overlies copper ore-bearing Carboniferous limestone, and Llwyn Bryn-Dinas and the Breiddin hillforts in Montgomeryshire (Musson and Northover 1981; Musson *et al.* 1992; Musson 1991), although evidence for extraction and smelting remains elusive in terms of workings or waste products; a fact that is true too for much of the rest of Britain. What is not seen, however, is iron production on anything like the scale seen at *Ariconium*, for instance (Dalwood *et al.*, this volume). The focus appears to be only on acquiring enough for need rather than with a view to creating a surplus to exploit economically.

The picture that emerges from this outline sketch is a people that were self-sufficient and engaged in long-distance exchange networks along which salt in particular appears to have flowed, although this

prominence may merely be due to its archaeological visibility. Raw materials, including iron, copper and lead, were available and appear to have been worked and perhaps traded. Agricultural production seems to have been dominated by cattle-rearing but balanced by significant arable production strong enough to support a relatively large population and to create enough surplus to allow society to consider large-scale projects such as hillfort creation or augmentation or road building. There was an elite who had the expected trappings of their peers: horses, chariots, swords, fancy brooches, metal vessels, ornamental metalwork, but that did not engage with coins and finely worked pottery. Theirs was a strong and self-contained society, but it was to be transformed with the arrival of Rome.

The Roman Conquest and occupation

The arrival of the Roman army into the Shropshire area must have happened within a few years of the initial landing, and certainly by AD 47. While there is no documentation, it must be suspected that the *Cornovii* were among the 11 tribes who submitted to Claudius without resistance (*CIL* VI.920 923 = 31203–4; Suetonius *Vita Claudii* 17). The significance of this is that those peoples who submitted to Roman power would have been treated favourably, not least in being allowed to retain their own elite. However, it is possible that there was some initial opposition as the point has been made that the evidence of destruction and attack at some hillforts in the region, including the Wrekin (Stanford *et al.* 1984; White and Webster 1994), and the occupation by the army of others, indicates that there was some resistance (Mattingley 2006, 96–9).

The evidence of marching camps and the logic of the positioning of Roman forces at the outset suggests two lines of attack. The first, originating at Water Eaton (*Pennocrucium*), passed to the north of the Wrekin to head due west along what became Watling Street, with a secondary thrust heading north-west to secure the northern part of the tribal territory (Waddelove and Waddelove 2004); the second, originating from Greensforge, headed west and north-west to secure the south Shropshire uplands and the west bank of the Severn Valley (Figures 1.2 and 6.3). This line of advance was ultimately secured by a series of camps constructed along the road aligned roughly north–south (Margary 6) from the Chester area, where the fortress was later

built, to Rhyn Park, to Wroxeter, where the XIII Legion established its base in the late 50s AD, thence to Upper Affcot and beyond to Leintwardine (Burnham and Davies 2010, 37–42). There the road seems to have divided, with a south-east route extending past Kenchester to the Kingsholm fortress occupied by the XX Legion while a second branch passed south through Clyro to Usk, the legionary fortress established by the II Legion which was later relocated to its permanent base at Caerleon (Evans *et al.* 2010, 315–6). Of the marching camps themselves, we can say very little since archaeology is rarely able to discover much detail other than the ditches defining them. An exception is that at Bromfield where three bread ovens were located in the back of the rampart (Hughes *et al.* 1995, 75–83).

The speed of the Conquest, and the ease with which the army was able to move into the territory, alerts us to the possibility of an already established network of road or trackways existing in the Cornovian countryside. While this has only been proven in one instance – at Sharpstone Hill – the constructional sophistication of the Iron Age phases of the road suggests that this was not an isolated example (Malim and Hayes 2010).

The impact of the occupation on the tribal territory and its inhabitants should not be under-estimated and can be appreciated most clearly at Wroxeter. Alongside the psychological trauma of the defeat, there was first the loss of a substantial area of prime agricultural land and at least two farmsteads to the footprint of the fortress (White and Barker 1998, 41–2; White *et al.* 2013, 159) while the construction of a number of temporary camps on land immediately to the north of the fortress reminds us that around the fortress a considerable area of land, the *prata legionis*, was appropriated to the army for the fattening of livestock and the acquisition of raw materials such as timber and clay, as well as to assuage security concerns. This pattern at the fortress will have been repeated at every camp and fort constructed by the army across the region: there must have been huge losses of land in consequence, as well as significant amounts of natural resources, such as timber, which will have had to be located, processed and transported to the required sites (Shirley 2001; Mattingley 2006, 142–6). Additional resources, in the form of the army's insatiable demand for food and for animal products in particular: meat, wool, leather, and bone, were all vital to

the functioning of the army and were required in large quantities regularly (Mattingley 2006, 161–2).

A second, less tangible effect, will have been the introduction of new concepts to the tribe, including (but not confined to) the use of money for everyday exchange, the widespread use and production of pottery, the concept of land ownership and purchase, the introduction of new foodstuffs and ways of preparing food, the inevitable traders that followed in the wake of any army, bringing goods and sharp practices, the concepts of enslavement, prostitution and Roman law (including citizenship), new gods and a new justice, alongside different languages and conceivably also different races. The impact will have been considerable yet difficult to measure in the archaeological record and would have applied not just to Wroxeter but in lesser scale to all Roman forts established in Shropshire. The evidence for this can be seen, for instance, in the dense cluster of cultural material that can be found around fort sites, carried there along the extensive road network established at the same time as the forts whose purpose was to control the territory (White 2015, 143–4). This will have changed the countryside in ways quite alien to the Iron Age landscape of Shropshire.

Wroxeter is by far the best understood military site in Shropshire, and the detailed study of it since its discovery in 1975 has enabled a more nuanced appreciation of the impact of the Conquest on the locale and its community. The excavations by Graham Webster beneath the later town baths and *macellum* revealed the first cohort barracks and details of the ramparts and gate of the west side. Excavations by Kenyon and Johnson traced the east side of the fortress and further timber buildings, while Arnold Baker's aerial reconnaissance established the north side and located a granary, as well as the *intervallum* buildings on the south side of the fortress (Webster 2002; Johnson and Ellis 2006; Baker 1968). The detailed geophysical survey of the city co-ordinated by the Wroxeter Hinterland Project has permitted a metrological analysis of the fortress and reconstruction of its street pattern, as well as enabling a more coherent understanding of the extramural developments around the fortress. These comprise a defended area to the north and, between the fortress and the River Severn, a partially defenced civilian settlement (*canabae*) in which lay an unfinished bath-house (White *et*

Figure 6.3 Map of Shropshire in the Roman period. This map significantly under-represents the extent of cropmark evidence for enclosures that are likely to have been occupied for much of the period (see [Figure 6.11](#)). Mapping the full extent of these at this scale would overwhelm it so only a limited number are represented. Those shown are the ones that have actually been dated by excavation and have been entered into the HER as opposed those that are suspected to be of Roman date (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

The evidence of the fort at Pentrehyling, the only fort to have been extensively examined in the county, demonstrates a typical pattern of development for an auxiliary fort widely paralleled across Britain (Allen *et al.* 2015). The regular layout of the fort and defences contained the evidence for timber-built barrack blocks. The fort was only in occupation for a brief period, perhaps 20–30 years in total, abandonment coming probably at the time when the major timber structures of the fort will have required replacement. The principal interest of the site lies in the evidence for lead smelting (cupellation) which suggests that one purpose for the fort was to control the extraction and supply of silver for the state (White 2015). If so, this is important confirmation of the interests of the Roman state in the exploitation of the natural resources under their control. While we cannot extrapolate the evidence from Pentrehyling to the network of forts throughout Shropshire, there is little to suggest that they differ much in kind, other than that those on the road network, such as Whitchurch or Wall Town, continued in occupation as civilian settlements.

Roman Shropshire, first to third century

By the end of the first century the area of Shropshire will have been largely handed back to the control of the tribal authorities, the Roman army locally relinquishing control to move to its permanent legionary base at Chester. While we do not have a great deal of evidence for rural settlement in the second and third centuries in the county, what we do have is suggestive of a largely unbroken pattern of occupation continuing from the later Iron Age and thus a preponderance of enclosed settlements which continue to be sampled when development opportunities allow. The total number of such enclosed settlements sampled is, even now, a small fraction of the total number when seen against the density of sites discovered through aerial photography: in

the Wroxeter Hinterland Study area alone there were more than 150 enclosures identified, many of which must be Romano-British in date (Gaffney and White 2007, fig. 6.6; see [Figure 6.11](#)). However, while the pattern of settlements does not seem to have changed a great deal, in detail we can see changes at individual sites that are indicative of wider social developments. At Collfryn, just over the border in Montgomeryshire, the massive ditches of the enclosure, thought to have been provided to corral cattle, were filled in and the houses within were rebuilt, some being rectangular in plan rather than round (Britnell 1989). The filling in of the ditches implies that the need to corral cattle was no longer necessary, possibly because the cattle had been supplied to (or taken by) the Roman army. A similar phenomenon is seen at Sharpstone E (Bain and Evans 2013, 132–3). At Berwick Alkmund Park, a new enclosure – dating evidence suggested foundation in the mid-second century (Evans 2007, 152; Willis 2007, 176) – was endowed with a Roman-style house, complete with at least one underfloor heated room. The site appears to lie away from the Roman road network and it is surmised that the tile for its roof and baths was brought to the site by river, the Severn being about 1 km away from the site. The house presumably represents another member of the tribe's elite adapting to Roman ways while still maintaining a connection to the existing landscape and, presumably, to the family's holdings, as well as perhaps to traditional ties to kin or clan (Gaffney and White 2007, 71–8). A similar development is suggested by the cropmark at Ashford Carbonnel, close to the Herefordshire border (White and Barker 1998, 69), but this site remains unexplored. Excavations at a third enclosure, a substantial rectilinear double-ditched enclosure in Craven Arms, concluded that the enclosure originated possibly at the very end of the Iron Age or just after the Conquest and that the ditches were subsequently re-cut in the mid- to late first century and again in the second century before abandonment of the settlement by the third century (Malim and Wellicome 2016, 73–4). Structural evidence was slight, but included two ovens which contained charred grains of emmer/spelt, bread wheat and barley. Oats were also present in the samples but it was unclear if these were wild or cultivated. The grains appear to have been cleaned before arriving on site since there was little chaff so it was thought that the ovens may have been used for drying the grain.

Certainly, malting could be ruled out as a function since no sprouted grains were recovered (Mooney 2016). This is a rare insight into the arable regimes in such enclosures and highlights the value of integrated scientific and environmental analysis carried out as part of the planning process.

Around Wroxeter itself, there were dramatic changes signifying the full impact of the establishment of urban life. There were new sites, such as that at Duncote Farm, 1.5 km north of Wroxeter. This appears to have been founded *de novo* in the late first or early second century. The house was not recovered but its field system was. Intriguingly, this proved to conform to Roman land measurement systems, implying that the land had been settled by a veteran. The small size of the fields suggested the growing of market garden crops, an ideal and high-value crop given the proximity of the site to the town (Jones 1994). It should not be taken as evidence of a wider centuriation, however, since the existing field pattern shows no sign of major disruption. This is demonstrated closer to the town where the field systems of the pre-military age appear to have been reinstated and integrated with the newly established street grid by trackways after the town was established (White *et al.* 2013, 175–7). Another site, Duncote Fort, which is located close to Duncote Farm and adjacent to the River Tern (a tributary of the River Severn) also, exhibited traits suggesting that it had been established by veterans. Duncote Fort produced the intriguing evidence for a military-style rectilinear enclosure with rounded corners. Although similar in shape to a Roman fort, it was much too narrow to have been used to house troops. It is possible that it was a structure designed and used for the breaking and training horses for the army (Gaffney and White 2007, 82–7). Overall, such evidence suggests that settlement in the immediate vicinity of the town was reordered and, unsurprisingly, appropriated to meet the town's needs. This is consistent with the establishment of an essential element of towns and cities in the ancient world: its *territorium*. It is, of course, quite possible that this was merely the existing *prata legionis* transferred to the tribal authority.

The last decade of the first century and the 50 years after that saw a precocious growth at Wroxeter. The street grid was established at its fullest extent and re-ordered to account for a new centre away from the core of the fortress (Figure 6.4). This new central area was

provided in due course with the trappings of Roman civic life: a forum, a public baths, probably a civic temple of suitable grandeur, and a colonnaded high street to impress visitors forced to pass through the town centre by the changes to the road system. An existing *mansio* was located slightly away from this central route but close enough to be accessible (White *et al.* 2013, 112–4). Along the main thoroughfares, simple row houses aligned gable-end-on to the street front are evidence for the rapid growth of commerce and industry exploiting passing trade, while behind and around the public buildings large stone-founded town houses sprang up (White *et al.* 2013, 171–9). The consumerism of Roman society is enthusiastically adopted, epitomised by the gutter find following the forum fire of the mid-160s–170s AD. This comprised samian ware imported from central Gaul, whetstones from the north-western Weald (Allen and Scott 2014), presumably added to the consignment in London, and finally whiteware *mortaria* from Mancetter loaded as the goods passed along Watling Street. Alongside these goods were other exotics, such as glass vessels which were recycled, once broken, into beads and other items in a glassworking centre in the former *canabae* (Houghton *et al.* 2006).

Cattle and other livestock still formed the staple of the economy, evidenced by a possible cattle market established in the north-east quarter of the town, adjacent to the terminus of the town's aqueduct (White *et al.* 2013, 96–8). The focus on livestock is reflected in the farms around the town which favour pastureland rather than arable, suggesting they are being used to fatten stock that were driven to the town before being slaughtered (Gaffney and White 2007, 254–7). The by-products of the industry fed numerous trades in the town, some visible in the archaeological record such as butchers and bone workers, others less so, such as tanners and shoemakers. To balance out this picture, reference needs to be made to the rich environmental evidence for arable crops found in the Baths Basilica excavations. While only securely characterising the late Roman period, in contrast to the Craven Arms excavation, the cereals evidenced include barley; einkorn, emmer, spelt and free-threshing wheats; rye and oats (the last possibly wild rather than cultivated). Other edible species included cultivated peas, and blackberries, sloes, elderberries, hazelnuts and walnuts, all harvested presumably from the wild (Charles *et al.* 1997).

This evidence has been echoed in similar sample results from the recent pipeline excavations north of the city (Wyles 2017). In sum, Wroxeter flourished as a classic example of a Roman town in northern Europe (White and Barker 1998, 52–7).

For the rest of Shropshire, the picture painted by the work of the WHP, and to a lesser extent the MUS and NWS, is that this was a time of precocious development in the countryside too, but in a much more limited way. Pottery use penetrates briefly and widely across the territory, evidenced inevitably by the ubiquity of samian as a find on most settlements (Willis 2007), sometimes alongside *mortaria* indicative of the adoption of Roman food preparation methods or even recipes. Locally produced Severn Valley wares, usually in an oxidised finish, were also relatively common, with production sites at Atcham and at Meole Brace (Evans 2007; Houghton 1964; Evans *et al.* 1999). Along the banks of the Severn west of Wroxeter, recent work on a pipeline scheme afforded an opportunity to re-examine a pottery and tile manufacturing area identified through amateur excavations in the 1950s (Figure 6.5). Stripping of a significant area close to the confluence of the Tern and the Severn revealed a series of ditches and enclosures which produced a sizable assemblage of pottery dating from the later first to the late third/early fourth century (Evans 2017). The discovery of a small kiln and preliminary specialist analysis of the pottery indicate that both pottery and tile manufacturing was taking place in the near vicinity, whilst the lack of internal features within the enclosure suggests temporary and perhaps seasonal use. These locations are not accidental: they are both on the road network and one facet of this consumerism is that it was clearly related to the proximity to the road network.

The closer a settlement was to the roads, the greater proportion of Roman pottery that was acquired (Gaffney and White 2007, 269–78). Such economic factors led to the development of roadside settlements, of which Meole Brace is the best understood example locally (Hughes 1994). This has many of the features of a typical roadside settlement as seen elsewhere in Britain, with evidence for commerce and production, but is unusual in that there is no evidence for a *mansio*. Elsewhere in Shropshire, roadside settlements tend to be clustered in the *vici* outside forts, such as the Heath Road development south of Whitchurch (Hannaford 1991) or that outside Pentrehyling fort, on

the western border of Shropshire (Allen *et al.* 2015), and lastly at Redhill, now in Telford. Recent work at the latter location has provided more information about the roadside element of the settlement. Within the area excavated in the settlement, a number of buildings were identified in the 'backland' areas of a series of plots oriented at right angles to the road. In association with these were ovens and post-built structures, all of these elements were demarcated by a boundary ditch at the back of the plots. It is therefore likely that the settlement provided a range of services for travellers using the road (Mann *et al.* 2015). Similar fort-related developments can be seen at Wall Town and Leintwardine, hinting at a broader economic function for forts in encouraging trade and commerce among the rural communities. An unusual exception appears to be Upton Cressett, where large amounts of pottery associated with an apparent roadside settlement that seems isolated from the currently known road pattern confound our current understanding of the economic operation of Roman society in the region (Evans 2007, 150–2; [Figure 6.6](#)). It may be that another fort exists up on the plateau at Upton Cressett that is yet to be discovered.

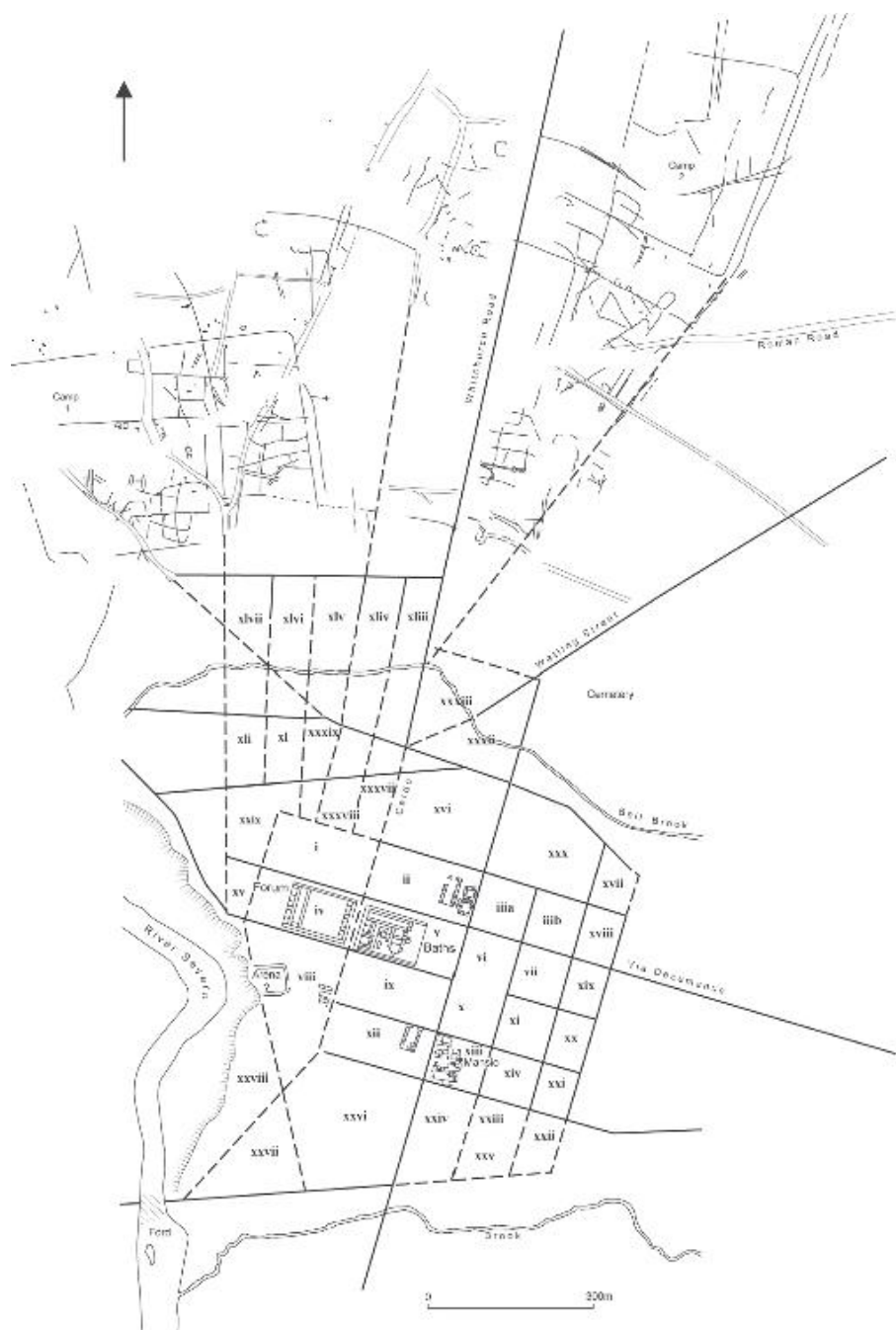


Figure 6.4 Plan of the early civil phase at Wroxeter, c. AD 90–180, showing the connection to the early Roman landscape to the north (after White et al. 2013, fig. 4.12; drawn by Nigel Dodds)



Figure 6.5 A view of the Atcham pottery production site under excavation, 2014 (Photograph: R. White)

Move away from the road system, however, and the use of pottery drops away dramatically. There seems to be little interest among the rural population in using Roman cultural material. This holds true for those areas surveyed by the MUS and NWWS projects as much as for the WHP. Recent work by Michael Greene in the south of the county also indicates little engagement with Roman culture there (Greene 2015). Yet excavation demonstrates that sites remain in use. It is not as though the population of the countryside empties into places like Wroxeter – it is just that the population does not seem to engage with the process of becoming Roman. One suspects this is indifference rather than outright hostility (White 2013). It may be that there was no disposable income because the fundamentals of reliance on stock-rearing meant that there was still no surplus that could be readily converted into consumer goods. As yet, such interpretations are still speculative and much more work needs to be done to identify and characterise rural settlement across the county.

One other type of settlement can be noted: religious sites in the landscape. One potential contender has recently been identified as a cropmark site near Cockshutt, south of Ellesmere. One suspects no great dislocation in the siting of holy places and temple structures in

the transition from native Iron Age rule and Roman occupation so it may be that shrines and temples in hillforts continued to be used for this purpose even if not still actively occupied domestically, as was the case at Maiden Castle in Dorset. Definitive evidence of this is not yet forthcoming save for hints in the later Roman period of a possible temple at Bury Walls and the discovery of isolated coins and pottery fragments that could hint at the use of Nesscliffe fort as a religious site (White 2007, 135).

Shropshire in Britannia Prima

Despite the relatively small amount of work that has been done in the county, it is clear that the later Roman period, from the mid-third century to the end of the fifth century, was a time of profound change in society. Earlier it was noted that there was no real dislocation at the time of the Conquest. It is in this later period that one sees real change in the countryside and in the towns. The reasons for this are difficult to ascertain and it is not clear whether it was a result of local pressures and problems but one suspects that this dislocation was more to do with wider changes in the Roman Empire and in society generally (Esmonde Cleary 2013).



Figure 6.6 Student excavation at Upton Cressett, 2009 (Photograph: R. White)

In the countryside, the change is made manifest at sites such as Berwick Alkmund Park, Sharpstone E and a recently discovered new type of enclosure site at Bridgwalton Quarry, near Bridgnorth. At the first, there appears to have been a systematic demolition of the building and a slighting of the enclosure. The section of the enclosure ditch produced evidence for the structured disposal of the house: first the deposition of the household god, the *lares*, expressed in a native format, then the household pottery, and then the building debris. This was a carefully considered and ritual action that has echoes of Iron Age practices that are quite alien to Roman approaches (Gaffney and White 2007, 71–8; 201–3). At Sharpstone E, similarly, the buildings are slighted and the enclosure is abandoned but the field system around it appears to have been maintained. The potential intentional ‘closure’ of the enclosure is perhaps also indicated by the structured deposition of a curated object, a late La Tene-style dagger, which appears to have been broken in two and the two halves placed separately in opposed entrance terminals (Bain and Evans 2013). At Bridgwalton, a geophysical survey and evaluation trenching in advance of the expansion of the gravel quarry identified a rectilinear enclosure that was regularly subdivided by internal ditches. The abandonment of this site in the later Roman period is indicated by the deliberate infilling of one of internal ditches with a sizable quantity of pottery. The discovery of a number of hobnails suggests that this placed deposit also incorporated at least one shoe (Wood 2013). This is a relocation rather than an abandonment, as also seems the case at Alkmund Park and Sharpstone E. Where did these families relocate to? It is possible that there was a move into towns or roadside settlements, symptomatic perhaps of a desire to engage more with Roman life, or to escape the pressures of the state which ratcheted ever upwards with demands for taxes in specie and kind (White 2007, 133–4). The flight from the countryside is seen elsewhere in the Empire in much better-recorded circumstances – in Syria and Egypt for instance – that imply it is the pressure of the state that is the root cause (Maas 2010, 28–30).

Another example of change is the growth of villa settlement. The absence of villas around Wroxeter and in Shropshire generally has long been noted and the lack of scientifically conducted excavation or investigation of these sites hampers understanding. The study of the

villa of Whitley Grange has added some substance to the picture. The site lies in the Rea valley, west of Meole Brace and close to the road extending up the valley on the route out towards Westbury and Long Mountain and thence westward, but is separated from it by the Rea itself. A number of enclosures are known from aerial photography in the valley alongside the road but also more distant from it, on the same side of the valley as the villa. A cluster of roadside enclosures was investigated inconclusively by the WHP (Gaffney and White 2007, 87–90). In addition to Whitley Grange there are also villas at Cruckton and Lea Cross. Cruckton is poorly understood but seems to have been founded earliest, while Lea Cross may have been founded in the second century and has produced a mosaic that perhaps dates to the third century (Cosh and Neal 2010, 309–10). Whitley Grange is firmly dated to the second half of the fourth century and curiously has no agricultural aspect, comprising just a dining room equipped with a mosaic and a large bath-house, the whole being enclosed in a courtyard (Gaffney and White 2007, 95–142; [Figure 6.7](#)). It is interpreted as a hunting lodge for use by an increasingly wealthy elite who, Empire-wide, enjoyed the pleasures of the countryside life in addition to their duties (Esmonde Cleary 2013, 215–45). Other late villas are known, albeit poorly investigated. Yarchester at the foot of Wenlock Edge was equipped with a fine mosaic of the Cirencester school but its plan is not clear overall (Cosh and Neal 2010, 307–9). Another villa, at Acton Scott, is poorly understood and dated but has produced a coin of Postumus of the late third century (Hannaford 2010; [Figure 6.8](#)). What seems to be emerging from this evidence is the expression of wealth in the countryside by the elite, while the rural population seems keen to abandon their settlements. These may be independent phenomena but could equally be symptomatic of wider changes in the Roman Empire that saw a polarisation of society, with the elite getting richer and more powerful and the rural population seeking refuge from the state by moving into urban centres where the state was less able to trace them, or to seek protection from the state and its officials through service with the elite.



Figure 6.7 Whitley Grange mosaic after excavation, 1995 (Scanned image of photograph by R. White)



Figure 6.8 Excavations and public Open Day 2008, Acton Scott villa (Photograph R. White)

Potentially a further sign of stress in society is the increasing deposition of hoards of coins, or rather the increasing non-recovery of hoards in the third and fourth centuries since one must assume that

hoarding always occurred throughout the period but that earlier hoards were recovered (although there are exceptions, as at Overley Hill; Burnett 1997). Of course, the non-recovery of hoards might not mean anything sinister at all. It may be that demonetisation of denominations made them not worth recovering, or that the hoard was offered to the gods and thus was removed from human concern. The recently discovered Shrewsbury Hoard, one of a number of late Roman hoards recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme in recent years, is illustrative of this latter interpretation. The hoard comprised 9315 coins, with a closing date of AD 335, and had been placed in the ground in a large storage jar. It appears to have been placed in the ground partially full with coins dating to c. AD 320, which were probably contained in a cloth bag closed with a nail, and was later topped up with a further deposit of coins dating to between AD 333–5 and sealed with a marker stone (Reavill 2009; [Figure 6.9](#)). This pattern of ‘topping up’ is seen in a number of fourth-century coin hoards and is often interpreted as the repeated deposition of votive offerings. In another example, it may be that the non-recovery had to do with the political aftermath following the crushing of the revolt of Magnentius after AD 358 (Reavill 2007, T664). Ultimately we cannot know the motives for hoarding and non-recovery but the increased incidence of hoards is a notable feature of late Roman society.

In the towns too there are signs of stress. The forts were largely abandoned by the army in the mid-second century following the increasing pressure on the armed forces to hold the Empire together. It was also perhaps a reflection of the more settled nature of Roman Britain. The communities living outside the forts in the *vici* in some cases appear to have moved into the former fort. At Pentrehyling, the inhabitants seem to have been involved in industrial processing of lead in the early second century as litharge cakes have been found alongside evidence for iron working. It may be that such activity had a quasi-official function, at least initially, and that this was work carried out by lessees of imperial monopolies (White 2015). Pentrehyling, perhaps unusually, appears to have been re-occupied in the fourth century after an apparent hiatus, dated by the unusual find of an inscribed silver spoon of a known late Roman type and a coin of the mid-fourth century (Johns 2015; [Figure 6.10](#)). Whitchurch too appears to have functioned as a settlement into the late Roman period and it

may be that the former forts had by now effectively made the transition to being quasi-urban in character (Jones and Webster 1968; Buteux 1996). At Wroxeter, stress in the system is expressed by a gradual winding down of the public buildings. In the case of the forum, an early fourth-century fire appears to have caused the abandonment of the basilica but not, crucially, the forum courtyard (Atkinson 1942, 105–13). The failure to rebuild the forum basilica suggests its irrelevance to the tribe and the townspeople, a symptom of the increasing centralisation of the state and the devolved nature of provincial government. The *Cornovii* now no longer answered directly to the governor in London but to a lesser official acting as governor in Cirencester, capital of the province of *Britannia Prima* (White 2007, 51–5). Such links explain the occurrence of another Cirencester school mosaic, virtually identical to that at Yarchester, in a refurbished town house in Wroxeter, while another mosaic, identified as having stylistic links with that from Whitley Grange, hints at a Cornovian workshop probably based in the town (Cosh and Neal 2010, 310–3, 315–6; [Figure 6.7](#)). Interestingly, the history of the baths paints a completely different picture from the forum with intermittent refurbishment and repair, sometimes apparently penny-pinching, at other times more extravagant. The main heated rooms appear to have closed in around AD 300 and were then gutted to provide materials for the development and maintenance of the smaller heated rooms flanking the main rooms. The complex seems to have remained in active use into and probably throughout the fifth century (White 1999).



Figure 6.9 The Shrewsbury Hoard (HESH-658701) in its storage jar (Creative Commons photograph for Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum)



Figure 6.10 Pentrehyling silver spoon (Photograph R. White)

Resources for those maintaining the town were clearly tight and this is reflected too in the creation and maintenance of the town's defences. In line with other towns in Britain, a defensive circuit was erected at the end of the second century. This was probably more to do with prestige rather than any threat, perceived or real, from external forces. These defences were then refurbished perhaps a hundred years later by increasing their height and making the town ditch much wider. Critically, and very unusually, the defences were not in stone but were merely earthworks, albeit massive ones. This is highly unusual and speaks volumes for a lack of resource. The town was simply not wealthy enough to afford a wall so it did its best to provide an adequate substitute. Whether conscious or not, the resulting defences undoubtedly looked more Iron Age than Roman (White *et al.* 2013, 179–84).

Despite this, the town appears to have had thriving economic connections. Pottery and glass is still imported in huge quantities, the latter from the new centres of production of late Roman Britain: Oxford and the Nene Valley for fine wares but also Black Burnished ware from Dorset, a staple import from the Hadrianic period until the closure of its production in the fifth century, and a shell-tempered ware from Northamptonshire that was an increasingly important mainstay in the fourth century (Symonds 1997). Severn Valley ware still continues in production, as is indicated by the late kiln at Meole Brace (Evans *et al.* 1999). New industries reflect these continuing

connections: jet from Whitby and shale from Dorset are worked from the raw materials into beads, bracelets and other trinkets for sale in Wroxeter's markets and ever-more inventive uses are found for animal bone to create objects of personal adornment and furniture ornamentation. People still have money to burn, obviously, and there is no sign of crisis in the market place. In contrast, there is a patent lack of resource invested in the town's public buildings which speaks volumes for the increasing perception in the late Empire that wealth was personal and was only reluctantly to be surrendered to the state (Brown 2012). Instead of spending money on your fellow citizens and the buildings they used, you might instead invest in a town house, private bath-house or countryside villa, thus avoiding the civic duty that often acted as a substitute or addition to tax systems. Naturally, it was easier for the rich to do this than it was for the poor townspeople or the rural population. Thus we see evidence for the aggrandisement of the larger houses in the town, and in the country the creation of lavish structures to indulge the tastes of the rich, as at Whitley Grange (Esmonde Cleary 2013, 113–42).

Final phase

In Shropshire, the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England is more drawn out than in much of the rest of the country. It has been argued at length elsewhere that this is an unintended consequence of the foundation of the province of *Britannia Prima* in the late third century which saw the west of Britain become ever-more independent of the rest of the country, ultimately following a different trajectory that is founded in the fact that it was easier to link in with communities on the western seaboard than it was to attempt to continue contacts with the continent mediated through eastern Britain (White 2007). This was exacerbated from the fifth century onwards by the 'paganisation' of England and the Christianisation of the west. These questions are explored in more detail in the final part of this volume so this section shall merely set out the evidence for fifth- to seventh-century occupation in the county.

What is clear, at the least for the fifth and sixth centuries, is that Brittonic culture was able to survive in Shropshire and that it was strong enough to repel Anglo-Saxon advances into the county. The earliest record we have of Anglo-Saxon settlement remains the

Bromfield cemetery, apparently seventh century in date, and the Dinham pommel, also seventh-century (Stanford 1995; Art Fund 1995). Archaeologically, the period is notoriously difficult to pin down as it has not yet proved possible to characterise fully a material culture profile for these two crucial centuries. At Wroxeter, various items can be securely ascribed to the fifth century at least but crucially, imported goods cease to arrive, even though they do appear at sites as close as New Pieces on the Breidden (Lane 2014, 509–11). Partly this is a problem of recognition: it is the equivalent of the proverbial needle-in-a-haystack to seek for a single sherd of Byzantine amphora among the many thousands of sherds recovered from the town but much easier to spot isolated sherds at New Pieces. Research into other types of finds do tend to support the interpretation of a late sequence of occupation at Wroxeter, notably the importance of dress accessories in black or white materials (jet, shale and bone) and a similar preference for black pottery (Black Burnished ware and shell-tempered wares) as well as red ware (samian, Oxfordshire ware) (White 2007, 149–54). In the market place too there is evidence for an enforced change, from the very high percentages of domestic animals to a diet more reliant on wild species (Hammon 2011). This is a picture of an increasingly inward-looking and isolated society. Unlike many other urban centres of this period there is no sign of fortification, despite the comprehensive reorganisation of the public buildings at the core of the town, and it has been speculated that the driving force behind the survival of Wroxeter is an ecclesiastic presence rather than a purely military one (White and Barker 1998, 128–32).

One other site can also be attributed to this period: the late occupation at Whitely Grange. Here the villa was remodelled after its demise, the bath-house being abandoned while the courtyard and dining room were reconfigured as accommodation (Gaffney and White 2007, 127–38). It remains to be seen whether other villa sites follow a similar pattern. Much more likely perhaps as targets to investigate in relation to this period are the hillforts which, as with Gloucestershire and Somerset and sites in Montgomeryshire and Denbighshire, might have become the focus for elite occupation in this period (*ibid*, 168–76).

Thematic overview

Military

The great period of aerial discovery of Roman military sites during the 1950s to 1970s seems to have abated in recent years so it seems unlikely that there will be more major discoveries to make. However, it is possible that more will be discovered through fieldwork since the one characteristic of military sites of the first and second century is their strong engagement with Roman material culture. Thus, even if they lie on unresponsive soils, high densities of finds may well be an indicator of a military site, especially where there is a conjunction of good topographical situation allied with a density of finds. This phenomenon was seen at Pentrehyling (Allen *et al.* 2015) and appears to be repeated at Upton Cressett, near Morville. The clay subsoil at the latter site has never displayed any cropmarks and the large quantities of surface finds there, ranging from the first century through to the fourth century, suggest a military site (Evans 2007, 150–2). As yet, however, there is only evidence for a roadside settlement with associated iron production so Upton Cressett has not been confirmed as a military site.

While it is unlikely that there are large numbers of military sites yet to find, those that are known are high on the list of priorities due to the relative abundance of cultural material available for study and the possibility of the occurrence of ecofactual material such as pollen or plant remains. Sadly, the poor preservation of bone across much of the county precludes any zooarchaeological analysis of military versus civilian patterns of consumption. The recent work at Red Hill as part of development work highlights an important opportunity to put earlier work into context through re-examination of earlier archives (Mann *et al.* 2015). The successful outcome in this case stresses the importance of grasping such opportunities with both hands.

It is also clear that we can no longer assume that the Romans were road building into virgin territory when they conquered the area. In some ways the discovery at Sharpstone Hill of an engineered Iron Age road only makes the Conquest, and its rapidity, more understandable. This conclusion poses an interesting research question locally and nationally: the evidence of engineered Iron Age roads would suggest a reasonably extensive road network in place when the Romans arrived. This is something that needs now to be tested elsewhere to see

whether this was just an isolated case. We can no longer assume that the Roman road system was Roman, even if they extensively upgraded it.

Urban

In many senses, Shropshire has been fortunate in having the benefit of considerable research carried out on its Roman urban sites. Prime among these of course is Wroxeter, where intensive excavations in the town centre have now been fully published and a detailed consideration of the whole town based on the geophysical and aerial evidence has just been completed (White *et al.* 2013). Equally important, the relationship between town and countryside has been explored and elucidated in a way that is ground-breaking and influential in understanding how Roman towns operated in Britain (Gaffney and White 2007). Further research is necessary but along very specific lines. First is the recognition that the urban character of Wroxeter still needs characterisation and this should be done through scientific approaches. Notably, geochemical testing through test pitting could be recommended. This would enable some confirmation of the industrial character of the town as well as aiding the geophysical survey whose continuation ought to be another primary research target. Characterisation of the latest phase of material culture is of national importance in understanding what Brittonic culture looked like in the fifth to seventh centuries, and should be supplemented by an extensive programme of environmental sampling to characterise landscape change through time for the town and its environs. Re-examination of the Barker archive, and specifically a programme of targeted radiocarbon dating to closely date the stratigraphic sequence will be the only way to resolve the long-running and continuing debate about the duration of occupation on the site (Lane 2014). The nationally important archive of cultural material from the baths basilica site, and also of Webster's archive (Cool *et al.* 2014; Cool 2011), has been made available online and will provide a powerful research tool for the future, especially if combined with the extensive remains from earlier excavations in the city.

The focus of work on Wroxeter only serves to highlight how little we know of the other urban and quasi-urban settlements of Roman Shropshire. The Central Marches Historic Town survey (Dalwood and

Bryant 2005) made an important benchmarking contribution but needs to be developed and enhanced through continuing investigations in historic town centres. Fortunately, this research objective can be achieved through the application of NPPF conditions to redevelopment in towns where this is applicable, but the corollary of this approach must be that briefs are specific about this research and that the results are disseminated rather than languishing as grey literature.

Rural

In the countryside, there are still many priorities despite the numerous achievements of the WHP and the Marches Uplands Survey (Gaffney and White 2007; Dinn and Edwards 2004). We have a greater understanding of the overall economic picture in the countryside in central Shropshire but the peripheral areas of the county are poorly characterised and understood. The enclosure site at Bridgwalton described above provides something of a precautionary tale in terms of our tendency to rely on cropmark evidence for site identification and classification. This site had previously gone undetected, probably because the narrow, shallow, gravel-filled ditches did not produce enough of a contrast in soil moisture level to promote the formation of a cropmark. It does, however, raise the question of how many other such sites remain to be discovered, even in the areas which favour the formation of cropmarks, and it is only likely to be large-scale development schemes that will afford the opportunities to undertake the scale of prospection work necessary to find them.

A promising area of research is through analysis of the post-Roman landscape as pioneered by Stephen Rippon. This takes environmental evidence (usually palynological) and comparison of excavated evidence for field systems and maps this against later historic evidence (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 57–123). The publication of the project's results which include the West Midlands region is disappointingly thin, perhaps an echo of the low level of work that has been achieved in the county due to the lack of large-scale development (*ibid.*, 254). An additional tool may be to use place-name evidence. A postgraduate research project by Tony Maguire, carried out during the WHP but left unpublished due to his untimely death, mapped the occurrence of *-leah* place-names recorded by Margaret Gelling (1992, 14–6) against

enclosures in the WHP study area: the result is virtually mutually exclusive, strongly suggesting that the woodland being cleared in the Anglo-Saxon period was in fact Roman or earlier. The complete absence of ancient woodland in the vicinity of Wroxeter is particularly striking (Figure 6.11). This is not to suggest that there was no woodland in the immediate hinterland of Wroxeter. It is much more likely that whatever woodland was there was extensively managed by coppicing. Further research of this kind is clearly a priority.

Independent surveys in South Shropshire, such as that carried out by Greene (2015), are a step in the right direction but north Shropshire is plainly a neglected area where work is desperately needed to characterise settlement beyond the river valleys. The continued need to explore enclosures throughout the region is clearly another priority and these too can be targeted as appropriate through the conditions relating to NPPF, particularly in relation to large-scale housing, employment land, minerals developments, and utilities/infrastructure schemes, and where possible under agri-environment and HLF landscape partnership schemes. The innovative approach of the Sheinton study (Hannaford 2005), carried out by a local archaeological and historical avocational group and supported by the county archaeology survey, was an exemplary study of its kind but projects like it are jeopardised by the lack of funding of local government for the foreseeable future.

As with the urban centres, the need for scientific approaches to data collection cannot be stressed too highly: environmental sampling and scientific dating opportunities must be seized but cannot be written into briefs retrospectively. The Sharpstone road and Craven Arms studies, with their integrated scientific and environmental analyses, demonstrate how powerful such work can be in elucidating and characterising settlement (Malim and Hayes 2010; Malim and Wellicome 2016). It is clear that a coherent research agenda for research into Shropshire's environmental evolution needs to be articulated and implemented as opportunities arise through the planning process. This is true also for the investigation of field systems and development of understanding in relation to crop management and change over time.

Industry

An important but neglected area of research in Roman Shropshire is its industrial history. A number of key areas for investigation can be outlined. First and foremost is mineral works, both for metals and also for stone extraction. To deal with the first, lead production is attested through the existence of lead pigs and litharge recovered from Pentrehyling, yet we have no real understanding of where the lead ore was extracted and processed (Bayley and Eckstein 2015; White 2015, 142–3). The controversy over the suggested evidence of hushing at Linley is symptomatic of our lack of understanding of the industry and its processes, while the remains at Linley Hall itself remain poorly characterised and understood although first explored over 150 years ago (White 2000; Pannett 2006; Wright 1872, 24–9). Copper mining at the Ogof Mine, Llanymynech (Musson and Northover 1989) is indicative of another presumably important industry but we have no real understanding of how long it operated for in the Roman period nor whether other mines in other locations were being exploited too.

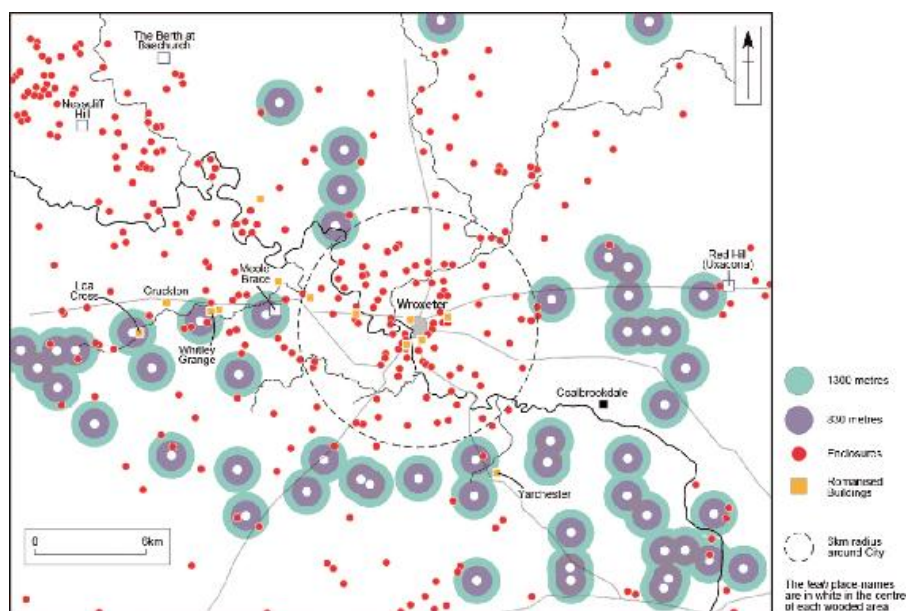


Figure 6.11 Map of Anglo-Saxon- leah place-names demonstrating their relationship to Iron Age / Romano-British enclosures and the hinterland of Wroxeter. The buffers drawn around the place-names may indicate wooded areas suggesting a pattern of mature woodland in Wroxeter's hinterland (Drawn by Nigel Dodds after work by Tony Maguire)

Quarried stone is also poorly understood as an industry in the

county. Sources for the principal rocks used as dimension stone at Wroxeter and other sites have been identified but not formally surveyed for surviving evidence of Roman working practices. Initiatives relating to mapping historic quarries launched by Shropshire Council offer an important opportunity to effect this research. Some quarry sources remain elusive, notably the micaceous sandstone roofing material that is ubiquitous on late Roman sites throughout the county (Bevan and Ixer 2007). A potential source at Boulden has been suggested by Peter Toghil but needs confirmation through thin-section analysis. One major research question in relation to the quarrying industry is how the stone was transported. Since the principal sources of stone and lime used at Wroxeter have been identified geologically at Ketley Bank in Telford, Hoar Edge, and Much Wenlock, all of which are located away from the River Severn but on the road network, the stone must have been taken by road to Wroxeter. Confirmation of this is provided by the extraordinary survival of the Acton Burnell bridge abutment and causeway ([Figure 6.12](#)) which has never been subject to the full research that it deserves (Sladdin 1956).



Figure 6.12 Acton Burnell bridge abutment (upper) and road causeway (lower) (Scanned images of photographs R. White, March 1994)

Finally, the production of ceramic building materials and pottery offers important avenues for research into working practices and trade in the Roman period. The pilot study of tile from WHP sites indicated that XRF analysis of fired products can enable sourcing of products to particular parts of the Severn Valley and its tributaries. This characterisation should be extended along the Severn Valley in an attempt to characterise and understand the operation of the Severn Valley industry, one of the more neglected areas of Roman pottery research (Cassidy 2007; Evans, this volume).

Religion

The study of religion in the Roman period in Shropshire is perhaps the most neglected area of all. The recent investigation of the putative Roman church at Wroxeter concluded that it was unlikely to have functioned as a church but did identify a strange reuse of the building as a midden dump (Colls and White 2013). Bushe-Fox's investigation of the temple on his Site V thus remains the only example of an excavated religious site in the county, although a putative roadside shrine has recently been published from the Wroxeter hinterland (Daniel and Reid 2017, 85 & figure 19). A late Roman temple has been suggested at Bury Walls, indicated by a fragmentary structure that was recorded in the 1930s and broadly corroborated by the isolated find of a Valentinianic coin from the hillfort interior by the owner (White 2007, 79). The excavated pottery at Nesscliffe might be evidence of similar practices. The publication of the corpus of sculptural material from the county has served to highlight how little survives, and how most of what does survive is urban (Henig *et al.* 2004). The late or immediately post-Roman burials at Much Wenlock (Wood 1987) are indicative of a whole set of data from cemeteries that is largely lacking from the county, even from Wroxeter. There, the cemeteries appear to have been largely ploughed out with only isolated burials surviving, such as the small collection of second-century cremations identified in a recent pipeline excavation north of the city (White *et al.* 2013, 170–1; McKinley 2017). Sadly, the acid soils across much of the county suggest that it is unlikely we will ever really be able to characterise the population of the region from cemetery data.

Conclusion

In a sense it is remarkable how much has been achieved in advancing our understanding of Roman Shropshire over the last two or three decades. It has come about largely through targeted research, mostly funded directly by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) or supported by them. Some infrastructure projects, such as the A5 bypass and development of the Meole Brace retail park, together with a recent spate of larger-scale development and utilities projects, have offered opportunities for large-scale funded work but this has been relatively rare compared with other parts of England. Similarly, there have been missed opportunities too in the past through briefs that have not been used to full effect to aid our understanding of wider changes to Shropshire's landscape through time, although improvements in the local authorities' local planning frameworks are now seeking to address this. An increasingly important method for advancing our understanding Roman Shropshire is the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It has made an enormous contribution to our record of artefacts within the county, many of which must represent settlement activity given the rarity of these artefacts generally within the county. To realise their full potential the finds need to be tied into an active research programme, one best coordinated through local universities, but working wherever possible in conjunction with local government curators and commercial archaeological organisations to make the most effective use of increasingly scarce financial resources.

Overall development opportunities in the county remain relatively rare but this only makes it more important to realise opportunities when they do arise and gain as much benefit from the degradation of historic assets, where this has to occur for the wider benefit to society, as is possible. For this we need and must ensure the continuation of a strong and fully supported county-wide historic environment provision.

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Staffordshire in the Roman period

Suzy Blake, Stephen Dean and Chris Wardle

Introduction

The modern county of Staffordshire includes the City of Stoke-on-Trent and the south-western portion of the Peak District National Park, but now excludes the urban conurbation to the south (Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley) which was once included within its administrative boundary. Staffordshire extends for approximately 90 km from north to south and roughly 55 km east to west.

The highest land is found in the north-east, where the Peak District rises to over 400 m. Cannock Chase toward the centre of the county rises to a height of 240 m. The rivers Dane and Tern form discrete sections of the county boundary to the north and west. The principal river is the Trent. This flows south from the vicinity of Stoke-on-Trent, and then turns gradually eastward before making a sharp turn in a north-easterly direction, to the south of Burton-upon-Trent. The main tributaries of the Trent are the Sow and Penk, the Tame and the River Dove, which forms most of the county's border with Derbyshire. The only other water course of any significance is the Smestow Brook, which takes a southerly course towards Kinver, draining into the River Stour around 2 km north of the settlement. In terms of drainage, therefore, Staffordshire perhaps has more in common with Derbyshire than it does with any of the West Midland counties.

The role of the area now known as Staffordshire within Roman Britain has historically been little understood. This is partly due to a lack of contemporary writing relating specifically to the area and

partly because relatively little in the way of major archaeological excavation was undertaken within known Roman military sites, towns or within the wider landscape until recently (with much of the focus of early work being on the Roman fort and later town of Wall only).

Early Roman period

The tribes in Staffordshire at the time of the Roman Conquest have been identified as the *Cornovii* (occupying the western half of the county), the *Corieltauvi* (formerly thought to be the *Coritani*) (to the east), and the *Brigantes* (in the far north-east) (Frere 1979). These Iron Age tribes and communities would have lived and worked in the rural landscape as extended family groups within farmsteads or small settlements and evidence for such has been demonstrated through archaeological excavation along the River Tame at Fisherwick. Settlement in Staffordshire in the late Iron Age may have still been focused within or around the county's seven confirmed hillforts; however, the lack of any systematic excavation on these hillforts means that it is not possible to say whether they were still occupied at the time of arrival of the legions, or if they were the focus of any resistance (Wardle 2017).

To date there is been little archaeological evidence for the early Roman period. This has predominantly been in the form of ceramic material recovered mainly from field boundaries, pit alignments and farmsteads excavated in the Trent Valley, suggesting a level of indirect contact between the Iron Age communities and the Roman world (a process known as 'acculturation'). Despite this acknowledged indirect contact through access to the material culture of the Roman world, it is not known precisely at what point the area fell under the sway of Roman administration and evidence for the Roman Conquest is mixed.

Data from the available palaeo environmental studies in Staffordshire (Leah *et al.* 1998; Ciaraldi 2002; Stevens 2008, 458–9) suggest that by the time of the arrival of Roman administration, significant areas of lowland Staffordshire had been cleared of woodland. Archaeological evidence from the Trent Valley suggests extant field systems were being reorganised in the early Roman period, probably to improve land management and drainage, although essentially existing arable farming techniques are likely to have continued. The introduction of the Roman, iron-shod plough did make

arable farming on more marginal land a possibility and there is evidence for exploitation of the upland areas of Staffordshire around Ilam and Wetton, where enclosures and field systems of probable Roman date survive as visible features in the landscape. Elsewhere, significant woodlands did persist around Cannock in the east (Needwood area) and in the far south (around Kinver). These woodlands offered grazing and foraging for livestock and a range of valuable timber resources and it is possible that Staffordshire may have represented a resource mobilisation zone (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 129). This is further supported by evidence for other resource exploitation by the Romans, including lead ore (at Ilam), possibly coal at Chesterton (Newcastle) and dimensioned stone to the north of Rocester (close to Hollington).

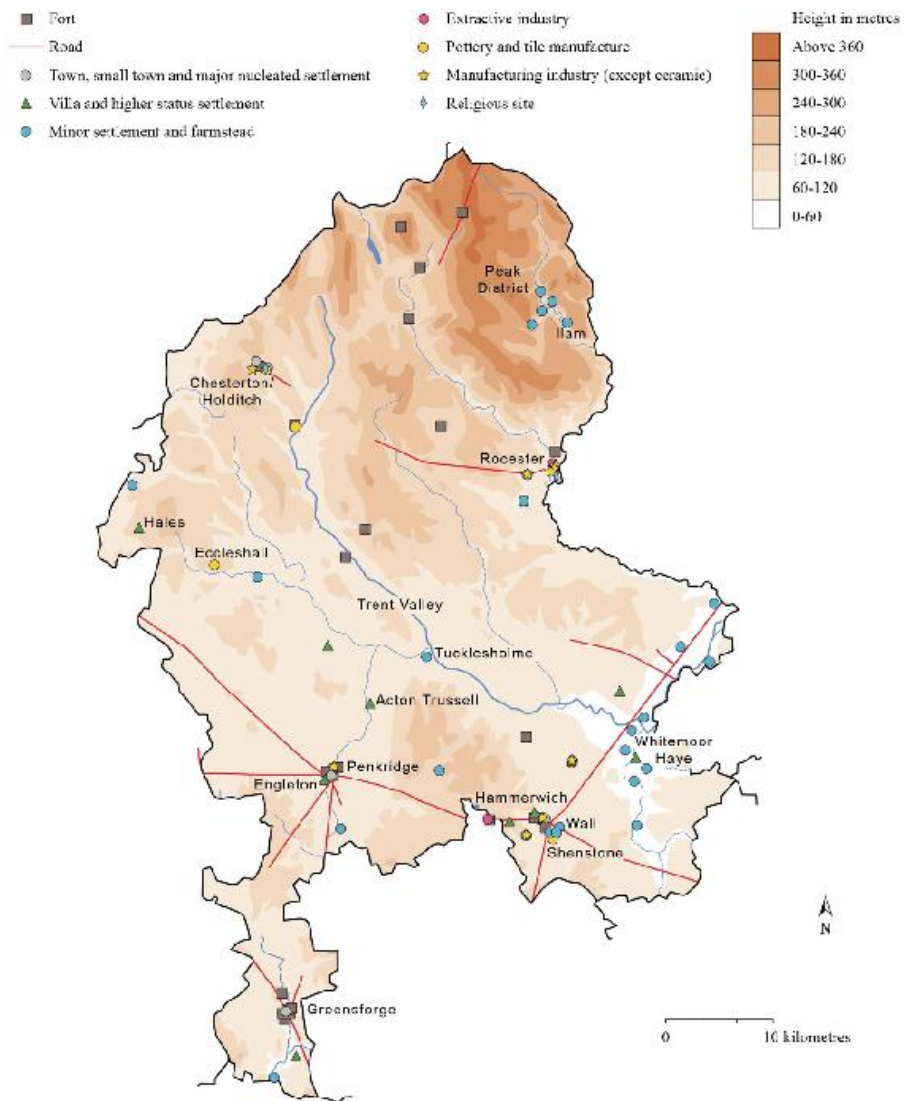


Figure 7.1 Map of Staffordshire in the Roman period (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

Communications

Much of the major road network throughout the county, particularly in south and central Staffordshire, is likely to have been developed at an early stage to function as part of the northern military infrastructure of what had become, by AD 200 *Britannia Superior* (Figure 7.1).

Major routes included Watling Street and Ryknield Street and these, along with other more significant routes, survive fossilised in the landscape followed by the course of modern roads such as the A5

(Watling Street) and the A38 (Ryknield Street). Elsewhere they can be traced in the alignment of medieval and post-medieval field boundaries and in some instances even survive as upstanding earthworks, for example as at Branston in the east of the county and Wheaton Aston to the west. Elsewhere, smaller roads probably connected local communities, farmsteads and resource exploitation points such as the narrow metalled road excavated to the north of Rocester which connected a major (un-named) road with a possible stone quarry site.

Of the major routes, Watling Street is likely to have been the first Roman military route constructed in Staffordshire, crossing the county on a roughly south-east to west alignment. This would have been the main route of the Roman army's advance towards the lands of *Cornovii*, subsequently linking the provincial capital (initially Colchester, then London) to the tribal centre or *civitas* capital at Wroxeter (*Viroconium*). Only a comparatively short length of Ryknield Street (the road which connected Yorkshire to the West Country) lies in Staffordshire, with part of it running from Little Chester, near Derby (usually accepted to be *Derventio*), through Wall and thence on to the fort at Metchley, south of Birmingham city centre.

A further route, crossing the northern part of the county, is almost certainly later than Watling Street. This runs westwards from Little Chester, passing near to Rocester and Chesterton before heading on towards Middlewich in Cheshire (usually accepted to be *Salinae*). In parts of northern Cheshire this road is known as King Street and it provided one of the many links between the garrisons established by the Roman army in northern Britain and the provincial capital. This suggests that this road cannot be earlier than AD 70, when the Romans annexed the territory of the *Brigantes*. Beyond this it is not possible to draw any other inferences regarding the pattern and development of roads within the county. However, there would clearly have been an extant system of roads and trackways within the county that would have continued in use by the native and occupying populations alike.

The major roads were laid out by surveyors and served the Roman army in the field in a number of ways. They helped with the army's supply system, facilitated the flow of information between the army and Rome, allowed reinforcements to be brought quickly to the area,

and enabled the army to make a rapid response to crises elsewhere. These Roman roads were also an imposition on the landscape, representing one of the first indicators of Roman authority made manifest on an occupied landscape.

Military

Campaign camps

Classical writers (such as Hyginus, Onasander and Vegetius) suggest that these surveyors were also on hand to set out campaign camps and there are a number of these recorded across Staffordshire (mainly from cropmark evidence). These campaign camps are difficult to date as they rarely provide much in the way of artefactual evidence and, within Staffordshire at least, have seldom been investigated in any great detail. They appear to be focused predominantly along known Roman routes or located in close association with forts and it has been suggested that given their distribution, such camps may have been for training purposes (although the size (some over 12 ha) perhaps negates this idea; Davies and Jones 2006, 5–7).

Classical authors (such as Polybius in *Histories*, Caesar in *De bello Gallico* or Josephus in *De bello Judaico*) relate how Roman units in the field used campaign camps not only to protect their bivouacs, but also to provide winter accommodation, and to protect troops besieging the enemy. It is now thought that campaign camps were also used to provide shelter for work teams engaged in construction and gathering resources and to train units in the techniques of camp construction (Wilson 1976).

Two distinct clusters of camps have been identified within the south-western part of the county around the forts at Greensforge and Penkridge (*Pennocrucium*). These presumably represent the massing of forces prior to the advance of the Roman army into Cornovian and Deceanglian territory to the north and west.

Forts

Exactly when Roman military activity in Staffordshire began to reduce in scale is not clear. Presumably it occurred after AD 71, following a period of chaos in Rome. Once Vespasian's position in Rome was secure from immediate threat, a decision was taken to impose direct

authority over the *Brigantes* and the legions moved north (Mattingley 2006, 115–7). However, even after the bulk of the army had moved north, a military presence continued to be maintained within the county in the form of a number of forts.

It is likely that some at least of these permanent establishments predate the campaigns in northern England (for example the earliest phase of the fort excavated at Wall (Gould 1964)). This raises the question as to whether it can always be possible to distinguish a campaign camp used to accommodate a unit over winter, what Polybius called a '*castra hiberna*', from a permanent establishment (Welfare and Swan 1995, 1–27).

Along with those known at Penkridge and Greensforge, forts have also been identified from archaeological excavations at Wall, Rocester and Chesterton. Two further possible examples have been suggested at Barrow Hill (north of Rocester) and Hollywood (east of Stone), although there is no evidence for an associated *vicus* at either of these and it is possible that neither represents an actual fort (perhaps rather some form of camp, signal or patrol station).

It has become evident from archaeological investigations that each of the five confirmed fort sites appears to represent a succession of forts at that location. These forts demonstrate phases of expansion and contraction, with each military establishment appearing to have had some kind of civilian settlement in the vicinity. Two of these civilian settlements appear to have been wholly abandoned following their Roman occupation (those at Greensforge and Penkridge), while the others remained the focus for settlement activity into the early medieval period and beyond (see below).

The military forts, positioned at strategic points in the landscape (i.e. on major roads or controlling an important resource), appear to have acted as a precursor to the development of the five recorded Roman towns. In each case the fort appears to have been founded between the middle and the end of the first century AD and it is likely that the civilian settlements developed shortly after their foundations as *vici*. At Rocester and Wall, archaeological evidence suggests that the final phase of forts appears to have been abandoned during the second century AD (Rocester in c. AD 180–200 and Wall in the early second century) and following this the settlement developed as a largely civilian endeavour. At Rocester, the fledgling 'town' occupied the

vacant military defences, while at Wall the settlement appears to have focused upon a civilian fortification close to Watling Street.

The *Antonine Itinerary*, a third-century AD list of roads throughout the Empire which itemises the places along them (Rivet and Jackson 1970, 46) and the *Ravenna Cosmography*, a seventh-century AD diagrammatic map of the principal roads across the Empire which shows the relative positions of named centres along those roads (Richmond and Crawford 1949) have both been used to suggest Roman names for the two *vici* located on Watling Street: *Letocetum* (Wall) and *Pennocrucium* (west of Penkridge); these attributions have been widely accepted (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 276–8). The three other forts and associated towns in Staffordshire (at Rocester, Chesterton and Greensforge) have not been named with any degree of certainty; the settlement at Chesterton (Holditch) has been previously identified as *Mediolanum* although this is no longer widely accepted (Charlton 1961, 26–8).

Wall

The most intensively investigated of all the Roman forts and settlements in Staffordshire is that at Wall, the site of which is now occupied by a small village. The Roman presence at Wall was quite apparent in the seventeenth century, when antiquarian Robert Plot described ‘some small fragments of wall which ‘tis supposed gave the present name to the village’ (Plot 1686, 401). It was partly as a result of Plot’s account that the site became well-known nationally, although by the time Stukeley visited in the later eighteenth century, much of the masonry was being robbed out (Stukeley 1776).

While it is quite likely that some archaeological investigations took place before then, the first recorded excavation took place in the 1870s. These excavations by Colonel Bagnall, a retired army officer, began on the site where the Roman masonry had formerly stood, and then spread further afield (Bagnall 1874; Irvine 1890). The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a host of small-scale excavations in and around the village (Becket 1923; Dibben 1915; 1916; Hodgkinson 1929; Jackson 1927; Lynam 1913; 1915). After a hiatus in the middle of the century, archaeological activity at Wall resumed in the late 1950s; this renewal of interest was sparked-off partly by the need to produce a visitors’ guide to the site, and partly by the construction of

a bypass on the A5 to the south of the modern village. This activity has continued until very recent times (including Ball and Ball 1985; Friel and Meeson 1987; Gould 1964; 1966; 1968; Jones 1998; Lyon and Gould 1964; Ross 1980; Round 1971; 1974; 1980; 1983; 1992; Webster 1958b; 1959).

Wall stands astride Watling Street, with the core of the site probably lying some 750 m north-west of its junction with Ryknield Street (Figure 7.2). The reason for the site not having been centred upon the junction is not clear. There has been speculation that there might have been an earlier large campaign camp in this area, but convincing evidence has yet to be provided. It may be that the junction itself just did not provide a suitable location for a permanent fort, or that the site was established before Ryknield Street extended this far north. Archaeological excavations along the route of the M6 Toll have revealed, however, that the area to the south-west and south-east of the junction was occupied by a cremation and inhumation cemetery (straddling Ryknield Street). The cemetery probably served at least part of the town of Wall, its eastern suburbs and the immediate rural hinterland, and its earliest use appears to be contemporary with the early occupation of Wall (McKinley 2008, 185–7), perhaps contradicting the idea that the area (to the south of the junction at least), was ever occupied by a campaign camp.

Possible early (Claudian) military activity pre-dating the ‘permanent’ forts has also been suggested from cropmark evidence at Wall. This evidence comprises possible campaign camps to the south of Watling Street (Welfare and Swan 1995; Friel and Meeson 1987; Jones 1998, 44), located to either side of the suggested course of a Roman road heading south from Watling Street (now Ashcroft Lane). The first permanent military occupation has been identified as a Neronian camp, established on the top of the hill north of Watling Street, some 750 m north-west of the junction of Watling Street and Ryknield Street (Jones 1998). This earliest fort was succeeded by two Flavian phases the latest of which may have continued in use into the second century (Gould 1964, 7; Round 1971; Round 1983; Jones 1998, 1). The forts at Wall appear to have been abandoned in the early second century AD, evidence which is consistent for the date of abandonment for other forts within the county including Greensforge (Frere and St Joseph 1983, 96–9) and Rocester (Webster 1962).

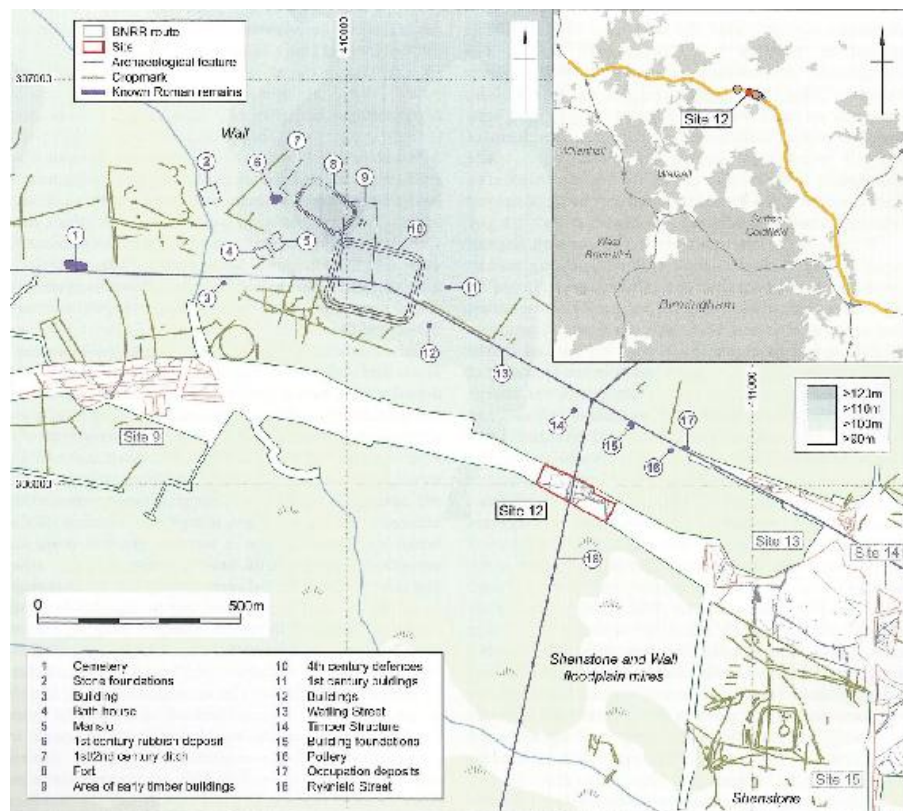


Figure 7.2 Map of Wall showing principal military and other sites (after McKinley 2008, fig. 61)

It is possible that the early military occupation at Wall may have been associated with the advance of the Roman army westwards towards Wales under *Ostorius Scapula*. It has even been postulated as the fortress of the XIV Legion prior to its establishment at Wroxeter (Gould 1964, 15). Whether or not this was the case, it is clear that the forts at Wall were sited in a strategic location not only on routes west towards Wales, but also north-west towards Chester and north-east towards Derby.

Penkridge

Roman military activity at Penkridge was also probably associated with strategic positioning along routes west and north-west, although unlike at Wall the identification and investigation of the Roman sites here was relatively late. Robert Plot suggested the possible existence of a Roman site in the vicinity of Penkridge in the late seventeenth century (Plot 1686, 401), but it was not until 1946 that a Roman

enclosure was identified from aerial photography some 3.5 km west of the modern town of Penkridge along Watling Street (St Joseph 1953a, 50–7), and as at Wall, straddling either side of the road. There followed a flurry of activity in the area in the 1960s and early 1970s in the form of aerial survey and small-scale excavation, which revealed not one, but a whole series of Roman military enclosures in the area and indicated that Roman occupation began here in the mid-first century AD and lasted through into the fourth century (Barton 1958, 6–9; St Joseph 1958a; 1958b; 1965; 1973; 1977; Webster 1957; 1958a). Unfortunately, many questions about the site remain unanswered and the only archaeological activity since that time has been a small-scale evaluation in peat land beside the River Penk in 1995 (Hughes 1995).

Despite the lack of recent investigation it is clear that Penkridge (*Pennocrucium*) would have been an important military site. Not only was it located on the strategic Watling Street, it was also situated at an important nodal point (as with Wall). Three roads ran south from Penkridge, one towards the fort at Metchley, another towards Greensforge, and a third towards southern Shropshire and perhaps a crossing of the Severn. A fourth road branched off from Watling Street to the west of Penkridge, heading north-west towards Chester. More recent studies of aerial photographs of the area have demonstrated the existence of a civil defensive work, a marching camp, two other forts, and five campaign camps, while a number of other cropmarks suggest the presence of further roads in the vicinity (Welfare and Swan 1995, 175–80); most of these enclosures lie just to the east of the Penk.

The multi-ditched enclosure that Webster believed to be a third-century civil defensive work, or *burgus* (see below), appears to occupy the prime site, on raised ground, astride Watling Street some 700 m to the east of where the road crosses the river. The supposed marching camp occupies a site 800 m to the north-east of the supposed *burgus*. It was identified as a marching camp on the grounds that the large double-ditched enclosure was of sufficient size to house a substantial part of a legion (St Joseph 1953a). A second, smaller double-ditched enclosure lies 70 m south-east of the supposed *burgus* and is probably a fort. A third double-ditched enclosure lies to the west of the Penk, some 200 m to the north of Watling Street; this is also likely to have been a fort. All the other enclosures seem to be characterised by single

ditches so are considered more likely to represent campaign camps. The close proximity of so many defensive works indicates that the site had considerable strategic importance, while the fact that there seems not to have been sufficient room to the east of the Penk to accommodate all the enclosures may indicate that much of the military activity took place within a relatively short time span.

Greensforge

Greensforge, the most southerly of all the Roman forts (and associated settlements) in Staffordshire, is arguably the least understood. Although a Roman presence at Greensforge has long been known, due to the surviving large rectangular earthwork (Plot 1686; Lynam 1908), very little fieldwork has ever been carried out on the site. In the 1920s, a schoolmaster from Wolverhampton Grammar School carried out a small-scale excavation of the enclosure with a party of his pupils (Mander 1929; Cantrill 1930). Only when the site was studied from the air did the military significance of the site become manifest (St Joseph, 1953b, 44 and plate 9.2; 1966; [Figure 7.3](#)), but apart from some fieldwalking to the west of the earthworks in the late 1960s (Webster 1981, 126), no additional fieldwork was reported at Greensforge until 1994 when an archaeological assessment in advance of a new motorway provided the first evidence for a *vicus* (Jones 1999).

As a result, the picture we now have of Roman activity at Greensforge is sketchy. Two forts were located on an area of raised ground to the east of the Smestow Brook, with an earthwork indicating the site of one of these forts. A second, and probably earlier fort, is indicated by a cropmark enclosure bounded by multiple ditches and pits 100 m to the south of the earthwork. Nearby there are number of cropmark enclosures that appear to be the remains of campaign camps. We do not fully understand the chronology of the military use of the site, but it is plain why the Roman army would have chosen the site, being on level ground with the Smestow Brook providing extra protection from an attack from the west.



Figure 7.3 Aerial photograph of Greensforge Fort B and its annexe (left), with Camp 1 visible above (Photograph by J. K. St Joseph, © Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs, Unit for Landscape Modelling; CUCAP AAZ-38, June 1960)

Rochester

Rochester has long attracted antiquarian interest, because the name suggests occupation in the Roman period and due to the occasional report of Roman material being recovered (Shaw 1798, 34; Page and Keate 1908, 192). The first properly recorded archaeological excavation did not take place until 1961, when trial trenches were excavated across an earthwork to the north of the church (Webster 1962). For almost 25 years there was, however, little of note to follow Webster's work at Rochester apart from some limited interventions (Iain Ferris, pers. comm.). It was not until 1985 that Roman Rochester began to be the subject of more deliberate investigation. Funding from

the Manpower Service Commission meant that, within a relatively short period, it was possible to carry out extensive investigations within the village. The site of a new cemetery (where the earlier trial trenches had been excavated north of the church) and the village's football pitch (close to the River Dove), were the principal areas of interest, with more limited investigation carried out close to the primary school (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1986; 1996). More recently, additional knowledge of the Roman occupation was unearthed during projects funded by developers to the north, to the west and to the south of the centre of the village (Ferris *et al.* 2000; Ferris and Burrows 2002).

As a result of this research we now know that a fort was established toward the centre of the modern village sometime toward the end of the first century AD. This fort was located on one of the roads connecting southern England to the garrisons in the north-west of the country (see 'Communications' above). The site was well selected, lying as it does on an area of dry land between the rivers Dove and Churnet, 2 km above their confluence. These two rivers offered protection to the western and eastern flanks of the town and, to a lesser extent, the southern flank as well. It is also possible that the suggested military site located at Barrowhill, c. 1 km north of Rocester, may have afforded some protection to the northern flank of the settlement. In spite of its good location, the first fort at Rocester was abandoned soon after it was constructed. At some time in the first third of the second century a second fort was built on the same site, although this also appears to have been short-lived. Around AD 140 a third fort was built on the site, lasting until the end of the second century when it too was abandoned (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996).

Chesterton

The hilltop site of the fort of Chesterton is now occupied by a secondary school and surrounded by early twentieth-century housing, while the nearby settlement of Holditch (lying some 800 m to the south-east across a valley), has suffered a similar fate, lying partly under an industrial estate created in the 1950s and partly under a more recent 'employment park' created on the site of an early twentieth-century colliery.

Sampson Erdeswick recorded ruined fortifications at Chesterton as early as the end of the sixteenth century; however, the deterioration in the condition of the site seems to have begun at an early stage in its recorded history. By the late seventeenth century, all traces of walls had disappeared (Plot 1686, 76) and within a century it was no longer possible to distinguish between fort defences and quarry (Shaw 1798, 15).

These antiquarian reports succeeded in stimulating interest in Chesterton in the later part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century but the resulting excavations met with only limited success. Lynam and Pape's first investigations found no Roman material at all (Charlton 1962; Pape 1926, 184). Pape's second attempt, followed by Bemrose and Kelly in the 1950s, did unearth Roman material, but neither managed to identify the defences that they sought (Pape 1934; Bemrose 1958). By the mid-1950s interest in the area appears to have waned, with the focus shifting towards the investigation of the settlement at Holditch (see below), with only limited, small-scale interventions taking place in the second half of the twentieth century.

As a result of this, our understanding of the military activity is sketchy. We know that the fort at Chesterton stood astride the same Roman road that ran through Rocester. A trench cut across the south-eastern area of the fort in 1969 finally unearthed traces of its defences, as well as evidence of other interior features (Goodyear 1970, 103). The best estimate the excavator could make as to the date of the fort was fairly vague, suggesting that it may have been constructed at 'sometime in the last quarter of the first century AD' (Goodyear 1970, 103), and no indication of how long the fort might have been in use was provided. Subsequent small-scale investigations have found evidence for structures in the interior of the fort (although none of these has been dated with any precision), while more recent work also failed to locate any defences (Boothroyd 1996; Coates 1998; Halsted 2000).

Whatever the role the military envisaged for these garrisons, they also had a significant impact on economic and social life (Mattingley 2006, 160–5). It would have been necessary to maintain a long-term presence inside territory that had only recently been occupied, with the primary purpose of the forts to keep a watch on the local inhabitants and secure the army's flank if the tribes to the west or

north rose in revolt. However, they undoubtedly also served as depots, both for locally gathered resources and for supplies brought in from further afield, while in the longer term they probably also served as recruitment centres. It meant a monetary economy was established in the hinterland of many forts, even where coinage had hitherto rarely been used. Taxation was gathered across the entire province, but much of it was spent in the vicinity of the garrisons. As a result many people were attracted to live close to the forts. These included the unofficial wives and families of the soldiers, but the majority of those who lived near the forts did so for economic reasons. Traders provided not only the food and equipment for the army's official requirements, but also goods and services for the comfort and entertainment of the individual soldiers. This demand for food and equipment was an important aspect of the spread of Roman culture and the inhabitants of the *vici* would have used Roman coinage, used Latin as a *lingua franca* and adopted styles and fashions that had more in common with other parts of the Roman Empire than they did with local British traditions (Burnham and Wachter 1990).

Evidence for provision of food and goods, potentially for military supply, has been identified at Tollgate Farm, which lies just over 2 km west of Rocester along the route of the Roman road linking Little Chester and Middlewich. Here, archaeological excavations have revealed evidence for an extensive settlement and possible industrial complex, with large barn-like buildings, evidence for smithing, and possibly shoe-making. Activity appears to have been focused on the site in the first to third centuries AD, dates broadly contemporary with the occupation of the Roman fort, before the area reverted to agricultural use in the late Roman period (Hollins 2011).

Towns

The pattern of largely rural settlement, comprising isolated farmsteads or clusters of farmsteads, is likely to have continued across much of Staffordshire during the Roman period. Indeed, life in general is not likely to have altered dramatically from pre-Roman times beyond the introduction of new items of material culture and the development of a more centralised marketing structure. However, it is during this period that we see the first real evidence of urbanisation within the county. All of the five Roman towns (or *vici*) in the county have their

origins in the settlements that sprang up in the vicinity of permanent garrisons, developing as foci for trade and administration, as industrial hubs, and as centres of religious devotion (although not exclusively so for the latter).

Wall

At Wall there remain many unanswered questions about the nature and extent of the civilian settlement. The most substantive evidence for the *vicus* comes in the form of two stone structures located some 40 m to the north of Watling Street and some 150 m to the south-west of the hill on which the sequence of forts have been identified. The remains of these buildings are on public display, with the larger of the excavated buildings certainly the remains of a bath-house and the smaller probably representing a *mansio*. It is believed that the former was built in the late first century and was destroyed at some time during the third century. The latter, it is suggested, was built during the second century on the site of earlier timber buildings, and was also destroyed or abandoned either late in the second century, or during the third or fourth century AD (Webster 1958b; Round 1974; Friel and Meeson 1998; Round 1992; Gould 1998).

After almost 130 years of investigation, it is surprising how much uncertainty there is with respect to the *vicus*. This is a result of the nature of most of the fieldwork which has tended to be piecemeal rather than systematic. Traces of Roman occupation have been excavated from across an extensive area. Discoveries range from evidence of industrial activity to what appears to be a high-status dwelling (Jones 1998). Excavation has also identified a large, late Roman enclosure astride Watling Street, to the south-east of the hill upon which the forts stood. This is believed to have been a third- or fourth-century *burgus*, similar to the one suggested at Penkrigde (Webster 1959; Gould 1964).

Scores of trenches have been excavated in and around the settlement, yet there is still very much that we do not know. For instance, it was not until excavations in advance of the M6 Toll that we knew that there was a sizeable cemetery to the south-east of the settlement (McKinley 2008). We still do not understand the full extent of the *vicus*, nor do we have a coherent picture of what went on in the interior of the settlement. It is largely due to reports of metal-

detecting finds that we understand that the settlement extended along Watling Street for over a kilometre, from the vicinity of the junction with Ryknield Street in the east, westward beyond the bath-house and a minor stream (Moloney 1994; Trevarthen 2008). We cannot say whether any areas within the settlement were dedicated to specific industries. Nor can we say whether any parts of the settlement were set aside as high-status residential areas. It is unclear whether the *vicus* had a planned street system. Until we do have a clearer idea of the internal organisation of the settlement, it will not be possible to say whether Wall had any administrative role, or served as a focal point for a pre-Roman British tribe. The relationship between the Roman town and the establishment of the ecclesiastical centre at Lichfield in the seventh century is also uncertain, although much has been written about it (e.g. Bassett 1992, 18–21, 33–4).

Penkridge

By way of a contrast to what we know of Penkridge's military significance, we know little of its *vicus*. Webster excavated an enclosure that he described as the *burgus*, and found evidence of Roman occupation that began 'in the last quarter of the first century and continued into at least the early fourth century' (Webster 1957). We cannot be certain how much of what he found was evidence for the military use of the site and how much was evidence of a civil settlement, and since there has been no systematic investigation of the Roman settlement at Penkridge we have no idea of the extent of any *vicus*. The most likely hypothesis is that the settlement ran along Watling Street, perhaps as a ribbon development. It is possible that the settlement may have extended as far to the west as the point where the road to Chester leaves Watling Street, although without systematic field investigation this cannot be confirmed.

Greensforge

At Greensforge it is a very similar story. Despite the identification of a possible *vicus* associated with the forts in the 1990s (Jones 1997), the exact location, nature and extent of the settlement remains enigmatic. It would be surprising if there had not been a *vicus* close to such a substantial military complex, but to date the only evidence comes

from west of the Smestow Brook where traces of occupation have been found extending up the slope facing the military complex. It may be that the settlement to the west of the Brook represents only part of a larger *vicus*, but there is no evidence for a civilian presence to the east of the Brook.

Rochester

As discussed above, although Rochester has not enjoyed the decades of archaeological investigation that Wall has witnessed, fieldwork in Rochester has been more systematic here than anywhere else and consequently, we have a better understanding of the *vicus* at Rochester than we do of any other Roman town in the county. It has been possible to form a comparatively complete picture of the *vicus*, with the main elements of the town appearing to extend to the north and south of the forts. Thus settlement extended for at least 750 m beside the margins of the River Dove. Archaeological excavations seem to have identified some of the zones within the *vicus*, with the area to the south of the forts being set aside for prestigious activities, including a shrine, whereas the northern fringe of the settlement was given over to an industrial quarter (Ferris *et al.* 2000).

To the south of the forts there appear to have been two main phases of activity. The first phase began c. AD 90 and lasted until AD 130, while the second appears to have started c. AD 150 and continued into the early third century (Ferris *et al.* 2000). This is consistent with activity in the *vicus* being stimulated by the construction and subsequent reorganisation of the military site, as appears to have been the case at Wall.

Despite the level of recent, systematic excavation and more detailed understanding of the civilian settlement at Rochester, there remain a number of unanswered questions relating to the extent of the settlement (including its northern limit, whether it extended west as far as the River Churnet) and the exact locations of the southern and eastern defences of the forts. It would also appear that the settlement at Rochester was flourishing in the second century, but that it subsequently went into decline (Ferris and Burrows 2002); it is possible that this view may have to be revised in the light of future excavation and analysis which could possibly provide the opportunity to examine the later settlement in greater detail (Iain Ferris, pers.

comm.). Certainly, continued small-scale investigations are beginning to provide further evidence for the extent of the settlement to the south-east. Evidence for a large north–south aligned defensive ditch suggested to be the continuation of the eastern Roman town defences has been recorded to the south of Mill Street, which may indicate that settlement extended further south than previously thought (Mapplethorpe 2015). Evidence for later features of third- to fourth-century AD date has also been recorded to the south of Mill Street, perhaps indicating a later phase of extra-mural activity in this area (*ibid*).

Holditch

The best understood of all the Roman towns in Staffordshire is that of Holditch, which lies some 1 km to the south-west of the fort at Chesterton. Investigations by Professor Charlton of Keele University between 1957 and 1961 not only provided clear evidence of Roman occupation, but also demonstrated that Holditch was the site of a significant Roman settlement (Charlton 1961; 1962). During these excavations he defined the western, northern and eastern limits of a substantial settlement straddling the same road as the nearby fort. He was also able to demonstrate that the town had been mainly characterised by small-scale industry, although there were indications of the presence of a few high-status residents.

These excavations at Holditch also revealed that the settlement was actually sited at the junction of two roads: the main northward route towards Middlewich (known further north as ‘King Street’) and a second road heading south-west. This second, previously unidentified road has been suggested, based upon its alignment, to have been heading towards the fort and settlement at Whitchurch and possibly the *civitas* capital at Wroxeter (Rogers and Garner 2007, 101).

More recent work has fleshed out this impression. Roman occupation seems to have started in the middle of the first century, with initial occupation appearing to have been of an ephemeral, temporary nature, perhaps being established as some form of campaign camp or annex to the fort at Chesterton (Rogers and Garner 2007, 135). The *vicus* really appears to have taken off in the late first century, with the settlement becoming a more permanent fixture and activity reaching a peak in the early to middle second century before

tailoring off thereafter. This relatively rapid rise and decline of settlement at Holditch can be closely related to the northward shift of military logistical supply (Rogers and Garner 2007, 102).

During its most successful phases the eastern parts of the town seem to have been mainly devoted to industrial production, whilst the western areas were used more for residential accommodation and commercial activities. One highly significant find was the site of a large stone building with a courtyard, on the northern edge of the former colliery. This structure dated from the early second century, and stood on the site of a fairly substantial structure erected c. AD 80. The excavators believed it to have been a public building of some kind, possibly a *forum-basilica*, or a *mansio*, (although they could not entirely rule out the possibility of a villa). In the mid-second century the stone building was removed and a third substantial structure, this time in timber, was erected (Rogers 1994; Dodd *et al.* 1998; Dodd and Walker 1999). The contraction and reorganisation of the town from the mid-second century AD onwards appears to reflect a more conservative (perhaps even relatively impoverished) economy compared to that of the earlier phases of settlement (Rogers and Garner 2007, 102) when it is likely to have been a key provider of resources to the military.

Although not located directly on or adjacent to the site of the fort at Chesterton, as is the case with the other forts and towns in the county, the settlement at Holditch is likely to have been closely related in origin (Rogers and Garner 2007, 101). The reason for the *vicus* being located almost a kilometre from the site of the fort remains an enigma. Garner has raised the possibility that the stone building at Holditch might have been built within an area that had earlier been used by the military. Another suggestion is that some of the inhabitants might have been mining for coal. Until the area is investigated more fully, and defences and Roman coal workings are located, these can only be conjecture.

Rural settlement

Villas

If the *vici*, and the traders, manufacturers and soldiers' wives who were drawn to them, provide the most obvious manifestation of

Romanisation, villas provide another expression of it. It has long been acknowledged that the majority of villas in Britain are where native families have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the new Roman occupation. These families used their greater wealth to buy into the Roman lifestyle, and set about transforming their traditional farmsteads into Roman-style buildings (Frere 1979, 302).

Only a handful of villas (nine possible examples) are known from Staffordshire and three of these have been excavated (Acton Trussell, Hales and Engleton), the remainder being identified from concentrations of artefacts (in particular building materials) recovered during fieldwalking. The presence of a tenth possible villa has recently been suggested at Hammerwich following the excavation of a large aisled building associated with nearby field systems (Figures 7.4 and 7.5). Although the building itself probably had an agricultural function (i.e. a barn) excavators considered that it was probably associated with a larger villa complex (Simmonds 2008a, 78).

The most southerly of these villas is a site known as Engleton, which lies some 450 m south of Watling Street and 600 m south-west of Roman Penkridge. The site was excavated by a local amateur group in the 1930s, which identified the remains of a corridor villa with a hypocaust at one end and a bath suite at the other. It was concluded that the villa had probably been constructed in the late second century and survived 'well into the fourth century'. No evidence for any pre-villa activity on the site was identified and no discussion as to what happened after the villa was abandoned was provided (Ashcroft 1938).

Some 8.5 km to the north of Engleton the remains of another villa, at Acton Trussell, have been excavated over a period of over 20 years (since 1984). These excavations, also undertaken by a local amateur group, have provided a much more in-depth understanding of the establishment, occupation and development of the villa site. Unlike at Engleton, the excavations at Acton Trussell have revealed evidence for pre-Roman occupation on the site. Finds evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation or activity in this area has been recovered, but more significantly, possible evidence of continuity of settlement from the Iron Age through to the Roman period has been identified. A series of gullies and postholes have been interpreted as the possible remains of Iron Age roundhouses while a large, rectangular timber

At Hales, in the north-west of the county, a Roman villa has been the subject of three periods of archaeological intervention. The first (in the late 1920s) perhaps used only rudimentary archaeological techniques (Pape 1929), while the second (in the late 1930s) was not reported upon. Archaeological excavations in the 1960s and into the 1970s were able to demonstrate that the site contained another example of a corridor villa with detached bath-house (rather than an integral bath suite as at Engleton), however the earlier interventions had significantly disturbed the remains of the villa and all but the most obvious traces of Roman and later activity had been destroyed. Due to the disturbance the excavations instead focused upon the bath-house, which showed that it had been constructed in the early second century, altered in the third century and abandoned in the mid-fourth. Evidence for pre-Roman activity was also identified in the form of three possible roundhouses of indeterminate date (which themselves were preceded by the remains of a possible Neolithic chambered tomb (Goodyear 1969; 1974).



Figure 7.5 Post-excavation photograph of the Romano-British aisled building, Crane Brook Cottage, Hammerwich (after Simmonds 2008a, fig. 54)

Although investigations of villas within the county have been

limited to a small number of sites, those that have been undertaken do hint at a chronology for this type of site. It appears that villas begin to appear during the early to mid-second century AD in Staffordshire, perhaps surviving into the fourth century. Excavations at Hales and Acton Trussell suggest that they were (in some instances at least) being established on sites which were occupied during the Iron Age, while at Acton there is a suggestion of a gradual 'Romanisation' of the site, perhaps associated with an accumulation of wealth and improved status as a result of economic successes associated with Roman occupation.

However, there is still little evidence to suggest the economic basis on which these villas were run. As suggested above, the large aisled building identified during excavations at Hammerwich has been suggested as an agricultural building which may have formed part of a larger villa complex. Further buildings, possibly for storage or for housing animals, have also been identified within a walled enclosure adjacent to the villa at Acton Trussell (Habberley *et al.* 2005). Such evidence may indicate that these villas perhaps functioned as estate centres in the Roman agricultural landscape, probably serving as collection centres and a focus for small-scale industrial activities.

Although there is only a limited number of identified examples of villas within the county, a study of their distribution indicates that they are often positioned close to the road network and within easy access of the local forts, campaign camps and towns. Whilst it is probable that most of what they produced went for consumption by local garrisons and to supply these towns, it is possible that some went further afield and it is conceivable that villas in Staffordshire might, therefore, have contributed to the supply of the garrisons on the Northern Frontier.

Farmsteads and agriculture

It is difficult to assess the immediate impact of the Roman occupation on the native population. The arrival of foreign rulers and imposition of new taxes was hardly likely to have been popular with the majority of the indigenous inhabitants. The most obvious signs of this antipathy were outbreaks of violence, such as the revolt led by Boudicca and perhaps the later 'barbarian conspiracies' (Mattingley 2006, 5–16). While events such as these are difficult to trace through the

archaeological record (with no clear-cut evidence for Staffordshire), there is a significant amount of evidence to suggest what impact Romanisation had on the county outside the main foci of the towns and villas.

Staffordshire has extensive areas of uplands and earthworks remains, interpreted as possible farmsteads, settlements and field systems (Cleverdon 1995; Makepeace 1998; Meeson 1984), are abundant in the landscape, particularly upon the limestone plateaux of the Peak District. The nature and form of these farmsteads, settlements and field systems indicate a possible Roman date, although in reality they are often difficult to distinguish from similar, later-prehistoric sites. A couple of sites have been confirmed as Roman through archaeological investigation (Cleverdon 1995) and the significant quantity of finds of Roman date recovered in the vicinity of a number of these sites (and reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme over the last 25 years), for example at Beechenhill and Castern in Ilam, provide further supporting evidence that these many of these field systems and settlements are likely to be of Roman origin.

There is also evidence to suggest that the area around the Manifold valley was occupied during the Roman period. Excavations in a number of caves in the valley (including Seven Ways Cave and Ossum's Cave, Ossum's Eyrie Cave and Elder Bush Cave) have revealed evidence of Romano-British activity, in the form of burials and occupation (Bramwell 1954; 1955; 1956; 1964; Carrington 1866; Wilson 1934).

Elsewhere within the Peak it has been suggested that colonisation occurred during the second and third centuries, but that by the fifth century many of these more marginal areas were being abandoned (Hodges 1991). Although there is plenty of evidence for Roman activity in the Staffordshire part of the Peak District, the lack of systematic study of this evidence means that no conclusions can be made as to whether there was extensive colonisation of the Peak District during the same period, or at what time this may have begun to decline.

Away from the upland areas there is extensive evidence for rural settlement and agricultural activity. This is particularly visible in the cropmark evidence recorded along the major terraces of the rivers Trent and Tame as well as in the hinterland of the Roman towns,

where extensive field systems, enclosures and associated farmsteads or settlements have identified.

In the area to the south-east of Wall (around Shenstone and towards Weeford and Hints) a gradual Romanisation of agricultural practices, settlement and the landscape as a whole is evident, with first-century AD 'native-type' farmsteads and later 'Celtic' field systems of probable second- to third-century date having been identified through archaeological excavations (Gould 1972, 1; Hodgkinson and Chatwin 1940; Mudd 1994). Further evidence of land management and agricultural practice has included the identification of probable areas of (wood) pasture and associated smaller, rectangular enclosures (possibly subdivided) that may indicate the possible grazing and herding of cattle or horses within this area (Gould 1972, 1–7).

Similar agricultural activity has been recorded within the river valleys. For example at Tucklesholme, situated on the River Trent, evidence for late first- to early second-century AD enclosures (considered to be primarily for pasture), superseded by several phases of enclosure reorganisation dating from the mid- to late second century, has been recorded (Francis and Richmond 2015, 181), while at Rocester and Whitemoor Haye there is evidence to suggest that field systems established in the Iron Age continued to be used throughout the Roman period (Ferris and Burrows 2002; Coates 2002, 87). Again, activity at these sites seems to have been focused largely on stock management, with some possible evidence for crop processing. However, despite activity intensifying during the Roman period agricultural practices are considered likely to have been generally low-status in nature (Hewson 2006, 114–8).

Outside of the river valleys and away from the uplands and hinterlands of the main towns there is still some evidence for rural activity. A thin scatter of Roman pottery recovered from fields to the south of Highgrove Farm, Kinver has been suggested to provide possible evidence for the presence of one or more farmsteads cultivating and manuring in this area (Staffs. County Council 2008).

Religious, ritual and funerary

Evidence for religious, ritual and funerary activity during the Roman period in Staffordshire is limited. Much of the early evidence is based

upon conjecture or poorly recorded antiquarian excavations and is largely associated with individual or cemetery cremations and inhumations.

The place-name Eccleshall, derived from the elements '*ecles*' (the Romano-British word for church) and the Mercian '*halh*' (meaning land by the river), has been suggested to perhaps indicate the presence of a church or religious community within the vicinity of the extant Holy Trinity church during the Romano-British period (Goodwin 2007), although to date no physical evidence for this has been identified.

It has previously been conjectured that the churchyard associated with the church of St Michael at Lichfield may be a candidate for Roman inhumations from Wall, as at the time when this was suggested only early Roman cremation cemeteries had been identified to the west (Gould and Gould 1976) of the settlement. This idea is perhaps now redundant given that recent excavations immediately to the east of Wall have produced evidence for extensive cremation and inhumation cemeteries straddling Ryknield Street immediately to the south of its junction with Watling Street (McKinley 2008).

There is some evidence for secondary Roman burials within earlier Bronze Age barrows in the Peak District and further inhumation burials of suggested Roman date are recorded as having been recovered from near the Lonco Brook at High Offley and at Hannah's Hole Cave in Wetton. However, these burials were all identified during antiquarian investigations and therefore the date of these may not be considered secure.

In terms of more substantial cemeteries (whether enclosed or unenclosed, cremation or inhumation), the evidence has historically been even more limited. A possible cremation cemetery is recorded to have been found at Yoxall in the eighteenth century which, although originally attributed to the Bronze Age period, has subsequently been suggested to be of possible Romano-British date (Page and Keate 1908, 198). To the west of Wall, at least 51 cremations have been recorded from a cemetery thought to have straddled Watling Street (McKinley 2008, 88). These cremations were found over a number of years and as a result of various interventions (mainly around the first quarter of the twentieth century) and in some cases the details about them are limited. Although the exact nature and size of the cemetery

is unknown, it is likely that it covered an extensive area along Watling Street. However, the opportunity to gain further knowledge about this cemetery will be limited by the impact of roadworks associated with the re-alignment and widening of the A5 in this area (McKinley 2008, 90).

More recent archaeological work has, however, provided an opportunity to investigate the nature of Roman burial practices in Staffordshire in more detail. Isolated cremation burials have been recovered from Ingestre (Lingard 1999) and Hammerwich (Simmonds 2008a, 67), while in the area to the east of Wall the remains of an enclosed cremation and inhumation cemetery straddling Ryknield Street (to the south of its junction with Watling Street) were excavated in advance of the construction of the M6 Toll road. It is this cemetery which provides us with the greatest information on the Roman population around Wall and the nature of the burial practices being utilised in Roman Staffordshire (Figure 7.6). The cemetery is likely to have been established shortly after the road, with its main period of use being for both urned and un-urned cremation burials (at least 42) during the early to middle Romano-British period (McKinley 2008, 91; Figures 7.7 and 7.8). There were also a number of later inhumation graves (at least 15) and evidence for the rare continuation of cremation into the fourth century (McKinley 2008, 91). The population demographic suggests a generally 'domestic' use for the cemetery, with both males and females represented across a broad age range and it is considered likely that it served at least parts of the town, its eastern suburbs and the rural hinterland (McKinley 2008, 186–7).

While these more recent discoveries provide us with a greater level of knowledge than previously, they do, in themselves, raise more questions about the nature of burial, and in particular the use of cemeteries, both at Wall and in the wider county. It would appear that Wall, being a large and successful town at the junction of two major roads, had at least two cemeteries spanning the main routes to the west and east. We know that most (if not all) the towns were positioned at similar junctions. However, where there has been a significant level of investigation (such as at Holditch and Rocester), no evidence for similar cemeteries on the outskirts of the towns have been identified. Perhaps this is because these excavations have



Figure 7.7 Wall eastern cemetery, Grave 129071, an urned cremation dated to the late first to early second century (after McKinley 2008, fig. 70)

If the evidence for funerary practice is limited, evidence for religion and associated worship practices may be even more so. There are antiquarian references suggesting that the church at Wall was built over an earlier temple to Minerva (Round 1980, 3), although these are largely unsubstantiated and given that the church lies on the projected course of the defences of the earliest Roman forts at Wall, this could perhaps be considered unlikely. Excavations in the 1970s revealed possible evidence for what is described as a ‘pagan Celtic shrine’ dating to the first century AD (Flavian period) at Wall. The ‘shrine’, which is suggested to have been destroyed by the construction of the later *mansio*, was interpreted from a series of nine carved stone heads or figures found in close proximity to each other, which may originally have been set into a plastered stone wall or screen; it is even conjectured that these may have been reused from an earlier religious building on the site (Round 1980, 2; Ross 1980, 3). Another possible religious building has also been inferred at Holditch, although as a result of more recent investigations; the remains of a large, stone-founded building close to the main road junction (and perhaps therefore near the centre of the settlement) has been suggested as a possible administrative or religious (temple) centre for the town,

based upon its size and location (Rogers and Garner 2007, 137).



Figure 7.8 Wall eastern cemetery, Grave 122874, an urned cremation dated to the early to mid-second century (after McKinley 2008, fig. 75)

The most significant evidence we have for religious devotion during the Roman period is a possible shrine identified during archaeological excavations at Orton's Pasture in Rocester. The shrine, a small, stone-built structure, was identified in association with possible repetitive acts of rubbish deposition and concentrations of what could be considered possible religious or ritual 'artefacts', including a possible stone altar fragment from within the shrine enclosure (Ferris *et al.* 2000). As at Wall, it would appear that this activity dates to early on in the military phase of occupation.

Resource exploitation and manufacturing

Elsewhere in the West Midlands region there is clear evidence for resource exploitation and industrial activity during the Roman period; however, this is something which is still poorly understood within Staffordshire. It is clear that the county had a wealth of natural resources including coalfields to the north and south of the county, iron, lead and copper in the Peak, and salt around Stafford, but there is little in the way of archaeological evidence to demonstrate how

these resources may have been used.

Around Droitwich in Worcestershire archaeological excavations have demonstrated considerable investment in brine extraction during the Roman period (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 129), yet there is little to suggest that the brine deposits at Staffordshire Common, around Weston and elsewhere, were being exploited in the same way even though there is evidence to suggest that they were heavily exploited in subsequent (medieval and post-medieval) periods.

Despite extensive earthwork and artefactual evidence for occupation of the upland areas of Staffordshire, there is no evidence for Roman lead mining, unlike other parts of the Peak District, perhaps because this area lay outside the main lead-mining region (Frere 1979, 322–3). Nor is there any evidence that the Romans exploited the copper ores in the Ecton area, even though we know that they were exploited before the Romans arrived (Guilbert 1994a; 1994b). The origin of the iron ore being used in Worcester's considerable iron-smelting concern is uncertain; the iron-fields of Staffordshire may have been exploited to supply the town (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 130), but there is currently little archaeological evidence to support this. It has been conjectured that the Roman settlement at Holditch may have been established to take advantage of local resources of ironstone, as well as clay and coal, although archaeological excavations here have yet to provide significant evidence for this (Rogers and Garner 2007, 135; Charlton 1961).

Despite the lack of evidence for the extraction of these natural resources, there is at least some limited evidence for manufacturing. Lead-working has been identified on the hill top at Wall, while the recovery of crucibles and slabs of lead during the excavation of a farmstead north of Shenstone has been suggested to indicate at least a local industry here (Gould 1972, 3). At Rocester, moulds for casting bronze fittings have been recovered during archaeological excavations (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996), perhaps indicating small-scale manufacture here.

Evidence for pottery manufacture is also scarce within the county, with only one confirmed site known, from recent excavations along the route of the M6 Toll at Shenstone (Simmonds 2008b, 241). Apart from this, only a handful of 'kilns' of unspecified function (but conjectured to be for the manufacture of pottery) have been recorded

across the county, with these largely focused on areas where there has been significant levels of archaeological investigation. This is particularly the case at Rocester (Cherrington 2007; 2008; Ferris and Burrows 2002) while at Holditch a certain quantity of the large assemblage of pottery recovered is assumed to be of local origin; although no kilns have yet been found, the area is rich in potters' clay (Charlton 1961).

There is further possible evidence for manufacturing and industrial activity within the county, with a series of probable 'workshops' identified at Holditch (Rogers and Garner 2007, 101) and probable evidence for shoe manufacture and smithing at Tollgate Farm, west of Rocester (Hollins 2011). This evidence is considered likely to be associated with the supply of military and civilians at the near-by forts and their associated settlements.

End of the Roman period

Staffordshire's essentially rural character throughout the Roman period would suggest that it was relatively unaffected by the end of the Roman administration of *Britannia* in the early fifth century AD. The military presence in the county had largely ended by the second century AD and in the third and fourth centuries towns such as Wall and Rocester appear to have retreated behind defences. These defences were either of their own design (such as at Wall) or represent the reuse and reconstitution of earlier military fortifications (as at Rocester) and might suggest a gradual increase in threat levels (either real or perceived), something which occurs across the country including first-order settlements (e.g. Caerleon, Silchester) down to small regional towns.

This increase in uncertainty would appear to correspond with a re-colonisation of parts of Staffordshire by woodland and while there is evidence for continuity in occupation/activity at Rocester, elsewhere this time of transition in Staffordshire is poorly understood. It may be that the predominant agricultural regime continued relatively unchanged; fieldwalking evidence from a small, early medieval agricultural community at Catholme does suggest an earlier focus of Roman activity (although no structural evidence was found during excavation). Elsewhere, settlement patterns are poorly understood; a refortification of Staffordshire's Iron Age hillforts has been suggested

but to date there is little archaeological evidence to support this hypothesis.

Future research

An examination of the archaeological evidence for Roman Staffordshire has demonstrated that there is still much to understand about the nature of military occupation and the impact this had on the native populations, how it influenced the development of communication networks and urban settlement, stimulated the economy and changed the nature of religious and funerary practices. It is also unclear to what extent the decline of Roman administration and infrastructure affected in particular more urban populations within Staffordshire and also the extent to which post-Roman estate centres continued to function following the withdrawal.

Campaign camps, forts and settlements

Recent excavations at Holditch, Rocester and Wall and within their hinterlands have demonstrated the establishment of campaign camps and forts early in the Roman occupation of Britain. This may in part be associated with the development of the road network and the gradual advance north and west by the incoming Roman army, but what of the role of the other, less well-investigated forts and camps at Greensforge and Penkridge? Do they follow a similar chronological pattern showing a gradual reduction in military presence and the flourishing of civilian settlement? What was the nature of the relationship between the 'temporary (i.e. campaign) camps' and the more permanent forts?

Even at those better understood settlements there is still much that remains unknown: at Holditch, for example, why does the *vicus* lie away from the fort; was there perhaps originally a *vicus* closer to the fort at Chesterton, or maybe a second military establishment nearer the settlement at Holditch? In the case of Rocester, what was the nature and purpose of the enigmatic third/fourth-century civil defensive enclosures and is there any demonstrable evidence for later defences elsewhere? What was the function of the *burgi* identified at Wall and *Pennocrucium*? At Wall, significant information on the hinterland has slowly been gathered over the last 50 years (from

small-scale archaeological interventions in the 1960s, to more recent investigations as a result of the construction of the M6 Toll and widespread finds evidence recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme), yet there has been no synthesis of this evidence to understand the relationship of the settlement with its surrounding landscape. Do other settlements in Staffordshire demonstrate similar levels of activity in their hinterlands, as is perhaps indicated at Penkridge (from cropmark evidence in the vicinity of the villa at Engleton) and Rocester (evidenced by excavations at Tollgate Farm)?

Do we see a re-occupation/re-fortification of Iron Age defensive sites (most notably at Staffordshire's hillforts) towards the end of the Roman and extending into the post-Roman period and to what extent does this continue the theme present in the third/fourth-century civilian defensive enclosures at Rocester?

Rural settlement, villas and agriculture

Only a limited number of villas have been identified (and even fewer excavated) in Staffordshire. As a result we have little understanding of their real distribution across the county, what their relationship would have been with the main towns, and what role they played (if any) in the administration of the lands around these settlements. Excavations in the hinterlands of Wall (around Shenstone) and Rocester (at Tollgate Farm) have demonstrated the existence of complexes with substantial agricultural-type buildings and evidence for manufacturing and industrial activity. At Shenstone this is conjectured to be part of a larger villa complex and the nature of activity identified at Tollgate Farm may indicate a similar relationship, but villas are yet to be identified at these sites. Similarly, where villa sites are known, what evidence can we determine about the activities that were being undertaken; what were they producing and to whom did they sell it? Were such sites built up from economic success associated with supply to, and demand from, the incoming Roman military and if so, is there a related decline in such sites following a reduction in the numbers of occupying forces?

Recent excavations at Acton Trussell have demonstrated a continuity of settlement from the pre-Roman period, with a gradual 'Romanisation' of the site appearing evident, but a lack of investigations elsewhere means it is unclear whether this is typical

(Acton Trussell Villa). Archaeological investigations along the Trent valley in the east of the county indicate that Roman farming practices (and field systems) were adopted only in later periods of Roman occupation. There is little evidence to suggest that this gradual adoption was also the case further west (towards Wales), or in the more marginal upland areas of the county. There is also little evidence for settlement (both rural and urban) for the early post-Roman period; can archaeological investigation provide any evidence for the nature of such settlement and the impact the end of Roman occupation may have had on the local economy?

The excavations at Acton Trussell have also demonstrated that the villa building extends beneath the later medieval church (Acton Trussell Villa). While direct continuity is not confirmed at this location, are there other possible early medieval/medieval religious sites where direct continuity can be attributed from the late Roman period?

There is evidence for colonisation of the more marginal upland areas of the Staffordshire Peak during the Roman period, but again little is known of the nature of this settlement. Earthworks have been identified as the remains of farmsteads and enclosures relating to agricultural activity, but the material culture recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme may be indicative of higher-status settlement and activity, as is suggested by the discovery of the Ilam Pan (also known as the Staffordshire Moorlands Pan; Jackson 2012; [Figure 7.9](#)). There is no known major Roman settlement in this part of Staffordshire but since the site lies close to the border with Derbyshire, could the archaeological and material culture evidence reflect hinterland activity associated with a more major settlement to the east?

Evidence from river valleys, particularly in the east of the county, suggests a highly exploited agricultural landscape and continuity of use throughout the Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman periods. Is this pattern reflected in the archaeological resource in the west of the county? Is this disparity a reflection of levels of archaeological investigation or does it demonstrate different exploitation regimes at work?

Palaeoenvironmental evidence for the impact of Roman agriculture on Staffordshire's landscape is scant at present. Work in the River Sow

flood plain at Stafford suggests agricultural retraction in the late Iron Age and woodland regeneration during the post-Roman period. This is supported by work at the King's Pool (Stafford) which also recovered evidence for limited agricultural (cereal) production in the area throughout much of the Roman period (Bartley and Morgan 1990; Stevens 2008). Is this pattern repeated elsewhere? Can palaeoenvironmental assessment suggest alternative agricultural regimes elsewhere in the county and, in particular, can it enhance our understanding of agricultural exploitation in the upland zone of the Peak?



Figure 7.9 The Ilam (Staffordshire Moorlands) Pan (WMID-3FE965). An enamelled pan, probably of British manufacture, engraved with the names of the four western-most forts on Hadrian's Wall, with enamelled triskeles below. Maximum diameter (on line of inscription) is 94mm (Image courtesy of Alison Nichols and Teresa Gilmore, Stoke on Trent Museum and Birmingham Museums Trust).

Mineral exploitation and manufacturing

Evidence from across the West Midlands region, to the north into Cheshire and east into Derbyshire, demonstrates that the Romans heavily exploited the natural available resources across the region. Yet for Staffordshire, there is very little archaeological evidence to indicate whether natural resources were being exploited in a similar fashion and to what degree. It is likely that, apart from its strategic

location for the expansion of Roman occupation to the north-west, the positioning of the settlement at Holditch was as much to do with readily accessible resources such as natural coal, iron, lead and clay outcrops, although evidence for extraction has not, as yet, been located. Similarly, the known Roman exploitation of lead in the Derbyshire part of the White Peak has not been identified extending into Staffordshire, and there is no evidence for copper extraction around Ecton (known from the Bronze Age) continuing into the Roman period. Is this lack of evidence purely a result of the lack of systematic survey and identification of remains associated with Roman extraction or is it actually reflecting the fact that these resources were not being exploited in this area? Or perhaps extensive extraction of these resources in subsequent periods has removed traces of early Roman activity?



Figure 7.10 A fragment of a Venus pipeclay figurine and a complete clay lamp recovered from the second- or third-century filling of an enclosure ditch at Shenstone (Site 15). While not necessarily direct evidence of religious practice, they are unusual finds from a rural site that otherwise seemed entirely agricultural in nature (after Simmonds 2008b, fig. 129)

It has been suggested that natural resources may have been exported from the county for use elsewhere, for example iron ore for smelting at Worcester (Esmonde Cleary 2011, 130). Can the use of

Staffordshire's natural resources be identified in the archaeological record outside the county (via metallurgical analysis and cross-comparison with extant raw material resources)?

Similarly, in terms of industrial activity (and in particular pottery manufacture, which is well represented in adjacent counties), there remains little in the way of evidence within the county. This is more likely to be a reflection of the lack of archaeological interventions identifying such remains, given that more recent work has identified a pottery kiln (at Shenstone) and evidence for shoe manufacturing (near Rocester). Given the number of Roman forts, incoming troops, and later settlements there must have been a demand for manufactured goods, but to what extent were the main settlements a focus for this and how much did the hinterland contribute to this supply network?

To what extent does manufacturing continue throughout the period and what is the impact of the withdrawal of the Roman military presence within the county and the eventual cessation of Roman administration?

Religious, ritual and funerary

There is very limited evidence for religious and funerary practices within the county. Wall offers glimpses of early devotion in a possible first-century Celtic-pagan shrine. A possible temple building has been suggested at Holditch, while at Rocester the identification of a probable shrine building provides the most concrete evidence we have for some form of organised, communal worship for Staffordshire (Ferris, this volume).

Unfortunately, given the limited amount of information relating to religious devotion and worship within Staffordshire it is difficult to draw any general conclusions about its nature and development. While it is certain that it would have been going on elsewhere (particularly in and around the main towns), it would be interesting to note whether any further patterns as to its nature can be established. For example, are temples and shrines a focus of activity in the early Roman period and if so, where did the focus of devotion shift to after this time? Where were the centres of devotion and worship within the five main *vici* (at Rocester the shrine appears to have lain south of the centre and forts, while at Holditch it is suggested to have been near the centre of the settlement) and can any reason for this be

determined? Who were the shrines or temples devoted to and is there a continuation of the worship of local deities through their incorporation into the Roman pantheon? What about the nature of more personalised devotion away from the urban centres and for different classes of society (for example, how might it be demonstrated within villas and how might this differ from lower-status occupation sites)?

Coin deposits and other votive objects (e.g. figurines depicting animals and/or humans) have been recovered from various locations across Staffordshire (Figure 7.10). These types of finds are increasingly reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme although at present there has been little analysis of this burgeoning dataset. An assessment of such votive offerings in terms of their distribution and typologies may enhance our understanding of such depositional practices.

Apart from a handful of possible Roman burials within earlier Bronze Age funerary monuments, several putative cemeteries recorded in antiquity within the eastern half of the county and the confirmed existence of two cemeteries at Wall (one to the west and one to the east), there is little other evidence for how the Romans dealt with their dead. Only the cemetery to the east of Wall has been subject to recent investigation and while this does provide us with some information regarding the nature of burial practices, it perhaps also raises more questions as well.

Archaeological excavations have tended to focus on the centre of the known Roman settlements, looking for the remains of forts themselves and the extent of the *vici*, but (apart from at Wall) little attention has been paid to the immediate hinterland and activity along the major routes leading into the other settlements where further evidence for cemeteries may be found. With only one recently excavated cemetery it is difficult to determine any patterns in the nature of burial practices within this area. For example, it has been suggested that the late use of cremation burials (as seen at Wall) may indicate conservatism within isolated communities or perhaps reflect individual or family tradition (McKinley 2008, 188), but without any comparisons there is no way to determine if this is typical behaviour within the county.

The discovery, excavation and scientific analysis of human remains

from any newly discovered cemeteries would significantly improve our understanding of the makeup, health and dietary habits of the inhabitants occupying Staffordshire's *vici*. Such results could also facilitate comparative studies between urban and rural populations within the county but also within the wider West Midlands region.

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Forts, farms, fields and industries: the Roman period in West Midlands county (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Mike Hodder

Introduction

Much of the evidence for the Roman period in West Midlands County has been obtained from work undertaken relatively recently ([Figure 8.1](#)). This has included extensive excavations at the fort at Metchley in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and post-excavation analysis and publication of earlier work on this site; the Birmingham Roman roads survey project; excavations on the line of the M6 Toll motorway in Sutton Coldfield; a newly discovered settlement and landscape in King's Norton; field walking in Sutton Coldfield, in Lutley in Dudley, in Barston in Solihull, and in Allesley in Coventry as part of the Coventry Historic Environment Project; discoveries of Roman pottery and Roman features in the excavation of sites otherwise of later date in Birmingham and Coventry; and the analysis of on- and off-site environmental data. This paper brings together the new evidence, the results of earlier fieldwork, and chance discoveries of Roman objects.

Investigations and discoveries within the built-up parts of the conurbation as well as in present open areas have demonstrated the extent of activity in the area in the Roman period, the potential density of individual sites, and even the survival of Roman landscapes.

They provide information on military activity, rural settlement and land use, and pottery manufacture and other possible industries, enabling discussion of continuity from the Iron Age; changes over time; land management and resource exploitation; site status and cultural affiliations represented by artefact assemblages; and continuity into the immediate post-Roman period and beyond. The evidence now available has important implications for future research and curatorial management.

Before Rome

Several definite or probable Iron Age settlements have been identified in the county (Hodder 2004, 44–8; Hodder 2017). Little is known about the character of occupation at the two definite and eight possible hillforts or the date at which they were occupied, and unexcavated enclosures could well be of Roman rather than Iron Age date. The excavated sites include three enclosures, all of a general middle Iron Age date, an ‘open’ settlement whose dating within the Iron Age is not yet resolved, and boundaries of late Iron Age date.

At Meriden Quarry in Solihull (Stevens 2005) an enclosure containing roundhouses was dated to the middle Iron Age, but pottery from the site included late Iron Age forms. The excavator suggested that it had been abandoned before the Roman Conquest. At Langley Mill Farm in Sutton Coldfield an enclosure containing circular house gullies of at least three phases, and a smaller enclosure nearby (Powell *et al.* 2008, sites 29 and 30) were similarly dated to the middle Iron Age but some radiocarbon dates and the presence of adjoining Roman enclosures suggest that occupation may have continued through the late Iron Age. The ‘open’ settlement of intercut roundhouse gullies excavated at the University of Warwick in Coventry (Hill 2002) is not currently closely dated because no analysis of the pottery nor radiocarbon dating has yet been undertaken. There is a ‘banjo’ enclosure nearby. At Walkers Heath in Kings Norton, Birmingham, three converging and successive gullies, presumably boundaries, contained pottery which was suggested to date to the first half of the first century AD. Possible burnt daub and charred wheat and barley in their fill suggested the presence of a settlement nearby (Coutts 2013). A podzol under the Roman road in Sutton Park (Walker 1940, 53 and fig. 3) suggests heathland in the late Iron Age landscape.

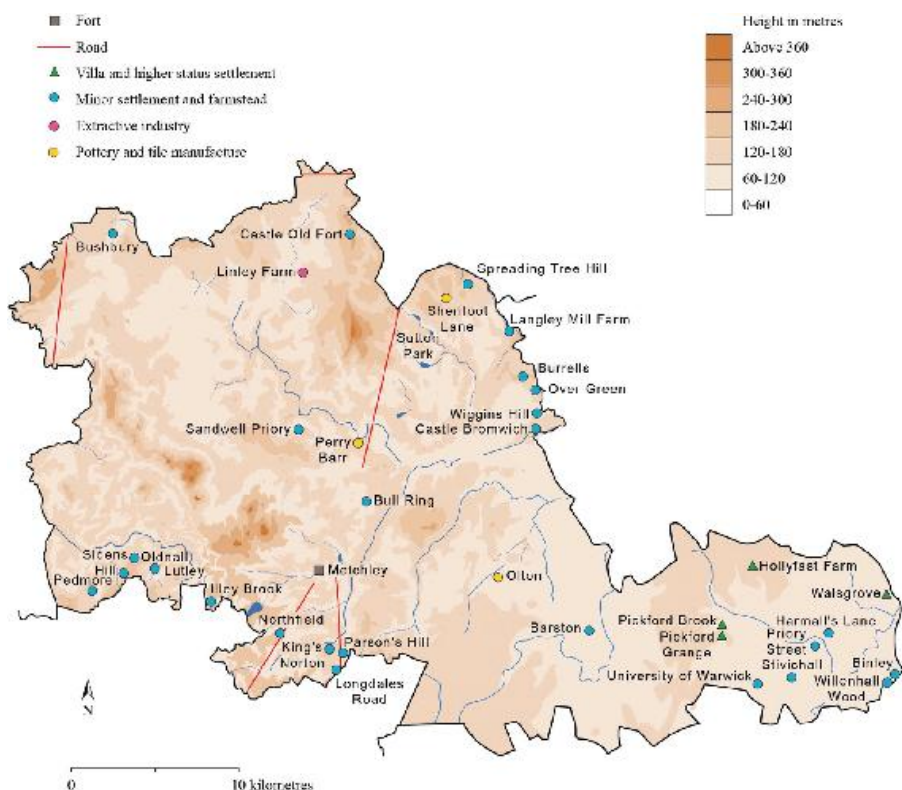


Figure 8.1 Roman sites in the West Midlands County (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

Forts and roads

Excavations at Metchley fort as part of new development on the University of Birmingham's campus and construction of a new Queen Elizabeth Hospital have demonstrated that the fort was larger, underwent more phases of development and was occupied for a longer period than previously thought (Jones 2002; 2005; 2011; 2012; forthcoming; see Figure 2.3). A small quantity of potentially Iron Age pottery hints at pre-Conquest occupation in the vicinity, but it might actually be of post-Conquest date. However, the fort is likely to have been deliberately located at or close to boundaries between the territories of the *Cornovii*, *Corieltauvi* and *Dobunni*.

The first fort at Metchley was established in the late 40s AD, covering 4 ha. and containing buildings constructed on two slightly differing alignments (Figure 8.2). It was soon enlarged with annexes on all four sides and had a short-lived settlement outside its west gate (Figure 8.3). Subsequent modifications of Neronian date initially retained the *praetorium* and possibly the *principia* of the first fort and

consisted of buildings of irregular plan and fenced enclosures inside the fort, together with funnelling ditches to drive livestock into the west gate, suggesting its use as a stores depot and supply base. The funnelling ditches formed part of a group of livestock enclosures laid out to the west of the fort which also incorporated another pair of funnelling ditches, a layout that looks more agricultural than military and again suggests use of the fort for military livestock acquisition.



Figure 8.2 Metchley: excavation of the via praetoria and buildings alongside it (Photograph: Mike Hodder)



Figure 8.3 Metchley: ditch of eastern annexe (Photograph: Mike Hodder)

Abandonment was followed by the construction of a further, smaller fort of late Neronian–early Flavian date (Figure 8.4), again with livestock enclosures outside it, and at least one subsequent phase that included recutting silted-up ditches and cutting a palisade trench into the former rampart. The ditch recuts contained late first- and second-century pottery, and pottery from the site as a whole shows that it was occupied in some form until the end of the second century, although it did not necessarily retain a military function. A rectangular pit containing a large quantity of ironworking debris, including slag and large fragments of hearth-bottom, was cut into the fill of the ditch recut. This feature is likely to have post-dated the final military abandonment of the site, which would have included at least partial backfilling of the defensive ditches. A cultivation soil overlay the backfill of the ditch recut and extended to the west of the fort.

A group of features of late Roman or even post-Roman date within the former western entrance of the fort included an L-shaped feature forming a funnel, probably related to livestock management. There was no associated pottery other than residual material but a radiocarbon date of calAD 50–90 provides a *terminus post quem* for this activity, which is interpreted as representing post-military activity at the complex. A structure that succeeded these, which is undated but is

considered by the excavator to be almost certainly post-Roman in date, consisted of an arrangement of pits or large post-holes in an arc, possibly incorporating a gate and forming a funnel used to drive livestock into the interior of the former fort. The fort's ramparts and ditches are depicted as earthworks on Ordnance Survey maps into the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore the fort remained a recognisable and potentially usable enclosure long after its military use ceased. Post-Roman re-cutting of the northern roadside ditch of the *via principalis* and resurfacing of the *via praetoria* shows that these too remained visible as distinct features.

The network of known Roman roads was of course a military network imposed on the existing landscape, serving forts at Wall, Greensforge and The Lunt just outside the county as well as Metchley. Some of the Roman road lines in the area are followed by modern roads, such as part of Pershore Road in south Birmingham, and others are visible as disused lines, most notably the well-preserved stretch of Ryknield or Icknield Street in Sutton Park, but it is difficult to trace the original lines of roads where they run through present built-up areas. However, a possible surface and ditches of a Roman road were observed in Farquhar Road in Edgbaston (Hodder 2004, 59), and recent excavation at Perry Barr, on open land formerly in recreational use, located a ditch whose alignment and dimensions show that it is likely to be the eastern side ditch of the Ryknield Street. The course of this road is therefore followed by the present Wellhead Lane adjoining the excavation site (Burrows 2011). Another part of the roadside ditch was found slightly further south at Stoneleigh Road together with a cobble spread that may have been part of the road surface or even part of an adjoining area of hardstanding (Burrows 2010). Roman objects found in the bed of the River Sherbourne at Cox Street in Coventry may indicate a crossing point: they included pottery, a third-century coin, a toilet set, a bronze ring, a jet ring and other metal items.

Possible changes in alignment of roads during the Roman period have been suggested (Leather 1994), and at least those stretches of road still followed today must have remained in use after their function as military communication lines had passed. There would have been many other trackways, often on more logical natural routes such as that along the sandstone ridge running north from

Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield (Hodder 2004, 63). Sites which are apparently isolated and at a distance from known roads, like those at Langley Mill Farm, Barston and Allesley described below, must have been approached along similar trackways. These may have been preferred by the local population to the better surfaced but less convenient roads, which might nonetheless have seen frequent use by official traffic.

Farms and fields

Much new evidence of civilian settlements and agriculture has emerged from recent excavations and fieldwalking projects. The nucleated, military-related settlement consisting of scattered timber buildings based around a road leading out of the west gate of Metchley fort is almost certainly atypical of other settlements in the area in both its form and location. Unlike at other forts, the civilian settlement at Metchley did not outlast the fort because the first phase, housing a large military garrison, was too short-lived, and the garrison of the later occupation was too small to sustain it. However, the latest phases of Roman activity on the site, including ironworking and entrances designed to control livestock, described above, probably represent opportunist civilian use of the former defences of the fort and its annexes, beginning in the later first century and continuing to the end of the second century and possibly beyond.

In Northfield, not far from Metchley, a watching brief during road construction 100m west of a probable Roman road line located a small amount of pottery including types of first to second century date but no features (Miller 2007). Subsequent excavation on an adjoining site revealed a cluster of features of definite and probable Roman date, with just a few sherds of associated pottery, which are likely to have lain within a plot of land running back from the road frontage. A short length of curving gully which contained the rim of a jar of early Roman date was possibly part of a roundhouse, two oval pits or postholes indicate simple structures, and a gully may have formed a boundary. To the south a stone surface on the stepped side of a pit included part of a quern stone of Roman date. The pit contained some Severn Valley ware and may have originated as a clay quarry, later used as a watering hole for animals (Taylor-Wilson and Proctor 2014).



Figure 8.4 Metchley: rampart of Phase 3 fort (Photograph: Mike Hodder)



Figure 8.5 Longdales Road: enclosure ditch with Lilycroft Farm behind (Photograph: Mike Hodder)

Small-scale excavations in the 1940s at Parson's Hill in King's Norton, south Birmingham, revealed gravel surfaces, possibly including part of Ryknield or Icknield Street, spreads of daub and

charcoal, and pottery dated to the first to third centuries, but no recognisable structures. Recent excavations at Parson's Hill on a former bowling green about 200m north of this site and very close to the probable line of the Roman road revealed a V-profiled ditch over 3m wide and over 1m deep at right angles to the road line, containing first to second century pottery and charred weed seeds (Foard-Colby 2011). The ditch is interpreted by its excavator as being marginal to settlement, so it was perhaps a field boundary, like those dividing plots at right angles to the Rykniel Street at the nearby Longdales Road site, described below, but it seems rather large for this therefore it could have formed one side of a settlement enclosure; it ran through the centre of a fairly small excavation area in which little of the interior of such an enclosure would have been seen. Two ditches and a pebble surface found in excavation in 2014 at Broadmeadow Close, only 200m north-east of this site, are currently undated and could be Roman or pre-Roman (Alex Jones, pers. comm).

At Longdales Road, only one kilometre to the south of Parson's Hill, on the western side of Rykniel Street, recent excavations have revealed a double-ditched enclosure in a prominent location 220m west of the road, within a ditched compound west of a series of roadside plots, defined by ditches and adjoining metalled roads at right angles to Rykniel Street (Jones *et al.* 2008; [Figure 8.5](#)). The interior of the double-ditched enclosure contained a roundhouse, an area of stone surfacing, and pits and post-holes. It was subdivided, creating a series of probable stock-pens, and it and the compound in which it lay had funnel-like entrances which suggest use for livestock. The roadside plots contained a ditched enclosure and two roundhouses, and other contemporary features including pits which may have been stock-watering holes ([Figure 8.6](#)). There was a small quantity of late first-century pottery on the site, but the enclosure, compound and roadside plots were in use from around AD 120, and into the later third century AD. The enclosure, compound and roadside plots are interpreted as an elaborate livestock management system, possibly functioning as a collecting point for livestock from the surrounding countryside, and possibly a local market or administrative centre. In contrast to the earlier arrangements, the latest phase of activity on the site was small scale and/or temporary. In the later third century the double-ditched enclosure was replaced

by a ditch and roundhouses and the roadside plots were replaced by a small enclosure set back from the road. There was a deposit of charred spelt wheat on one of the earlier pebble roads. The site was abandoned in the middle of the fourth century, but there was a single sherd of pottery of late or possibly post-Roman date.

Surviving field boundaries and those which are no longer visible because they are built over, but are recorded on historic Ordnance Survey maps, suggest that the roadside plot layout at Longdales Road extended to the north and south of the excavated area, and indicate that at least sixteen plots measuring 28m or 35m in width were laid out along the western Ryknield Street frontage, occupying a total frontage area of approximately 500m. Slightly differing alignments of the plot boundaries suggest that they were laid out in two phases. Further Roman features were found to the south of the double-ditched enclosure and just outside the present city boundary, where an evaluation trench revealed gullies, pits, a pebble surface and postholes (Patrick and Darch 2002; Hodder 2004, 65 and fig. 35), but no features were found in a trench on sloping ground to the south of this or in extensive trenching on the east side of Ryknield Street, on land sloping down to a stream (Edwards and Jackson 1998).

Over 3,000 sherds of Roman pottery were found at Longdales Road. In terms of vessel types and wares represented, the assemblage is typical of low status, small-scale rural settlements, and consists mainly of Severn Valley ware and Malvernian products, with a low proportion of fine wares. Large quantities of pottery have been found in repeated fieldwalking in arable land around Lutley, near Halesowen, which has revealed three sites just over a kilometre apart, each indicated by concentrations of pottery. At Lutley itself there were over 1,500 sherds, mostly Severn Valley ware and ranging in date from the second to the fourth centuries (Cole 2000; Cole *et al.* 2004). The 1,321 sherds found at Sidens Hill range in date from the first to fourth centuries, with a peak in the second to third centuries, and while this was also predominantly Severn Valley ware there was a greater range of pottery than on the other sites, possibly indicating that this settlement was of higher status. The site also yielded twelve sherds of Iron Age pottery (Brettell and Brettell 2002). 349 sherds were found at Oldnall, again mostly Severn Valley ware of first to fourth century date with a second to third century peak, together with

one Iron Age sherd (Smith *et al.* 2006), and smaller quantities have been found in the areas surrounding these sites. Fieldwalking in the Illey Brook valley, also in Halesowen, has recorded Roman pottery scatters about a kilometre apart, on both sides of the brook (Casey 2004; John Hemingway, pers. comm.).



Figure 8.6 Longdales Road: ring gully in rectangular enclosure within plot bordering Ryknield Street (Photograph: Mike Hodder)

In Walsgrove a spread of Roman pottery, tile and tesserae was observed during development and Roman building material was also found at three sites investigated by fieldwalking in Allesley by the Coventry Historic Environment Project. At Hollyfast Farm there were possible bricks and possible tesserae and ceramic building material; at Pickford Grange Farm there was a small quantity of pottery, together with *tegulae* and tesserae; and at Pickford Brook there were tesserae and other Roman building materials, as well as pottery including mortaria and greyware. At all four sites, the presence of tesserae suggests a high status settlement, potentially villas.

Extensive fieldwalking in Barston, covering most of the parish, revealed just one concentration of Roman pottery (71 sherds), which

was near the medieval hamlet of Eastcote and was interpreted as the site of a small, low-status settlement, probably a single farmstead (Burnett 2008). Elsewhere in the parish no more than three sherds of Roman pottery were found in each field walked, suggesting that the Eastcote site was the only Roman settlement in the parish, and that the present parish – a well-defined land unit of about 2,000 acres (about 800 ha) in a bend of the River Blythe – may correspond to the land farmed from this settlement, unless there were others in the locations occupied by the present village and the hamlets of Eastcote and Walsal End.

By contrast, fieldwalking in the Sutton Coldfield area has located concentrations of Roman pottery in small quantities which would be interpreted elsewhere as evidence for manuring with domestic debris, but because they can be seen in a wider context through extensive field survey they can be recognised as significant local concentrations (Hodder and Jones 2017). The two main concentrations, Over Green and Wiggins Hill, are just over 1km apart and each is close to a medieval farm in a medieval hamlet. It is of course possible that the Roman farm lies directly under the medieval site. If this is so, then the small quantity of pottery may be because the fieldwalking has been undertaken in an area which is peripheral to the main settlement. Unlike those in the Lutley area, each field here was walked once only, but even so more pottery would have been expected if comparable quantities to those at Lutley were present. The small quantity of pottery from fieldwalking in Sutton Coldfield is consistent with the relatively small quantities found in excavations at Langley Mill Farm and Wishaw Hall Farm, described below.

The settlement site indicated by the surface pottery concentration at Over Green lies at one corner of a rectilinear field system at the Burrells in Sutton Coldfield, much of which survives as existing field boundaries and may be Roman or earlier in origin (Hodder 1992). It is similar to demonstrably Roman or pre-Roman field systems elsewhere in the country. Assarting, suggesting that previously uncultivated land was being brought into cultivation, is documented here in the 1240s but is unlikely to have resulted in such a regular field system; it is more likely that people undertaking the assarting in the medieval period reused existing boundaries in land that had been abandoned after the Roman period. The alignment of the field system continues

as earthworks in adjoining fields and is followed by the alignment of a medieval open field system around Wiggins Hill further south. Continuity of use here and at Longdales Road (above) would be consistent with the broader understanding of the survival of Roman landscapes into the middle ages demonstrated by the 'Fields of Britannia' project (Rippon *et al.* 2015).

Two probable Roman settlement sites were identified on the line of the Coventry Eastern Bypass (Rylatt 1987). Excavation following identification of a surface scatter of pottery near Willenhall Wood, not far from the fort at the Lunt in Baginton, revealed a ditch and at least two phases of activity, probably in the second to third centuries. There was a substantial amount of pottery and building materials including daub, *tegulae* and brick or tile. At Brandon Lane in Binley a shallow pit was floored with clay loom weights and large pebbles and contained second-century pottery. Also at Binley, a watching brief on a pipeline revealed a small pit, a gully and a linear feature containing Roman pottery. Late Iron Age Wappenbury ware and an Iron Age or Roman axehead were found on a 'banjo' enclosure under a running track on the campus of the University of Warwick.

The Roman phase at Langley Mill Farm in Sutton Coldfield, on the M6 Toll motorway, was not identified in fieldwalking but there is a very thin scatter of Roman pottery in adjoining fields. Excavations here (Powell and Ritchie 2008; Booth 2008) revealed at least five large roughly rectilinear ditched enclosures of Roman date adjacent to an Iron Age enclosed farmstead containing round houses. Constructed in at least two phases, some of the enclosures were conjoined and there were also probable ditched droveways. Several pits, postholes and hearths indicate settlement but the only identifiable Roman structure was a small rectangular timber building, with a curving gully at one end (or a circular building may have been replaced by a rectangular one) and containing a possible hearth. A craft, industrial or even religious rather than domestic function is suggested: the main dwelling in the Roman period must therefore have been outside the area excavated. Smaller rectilinear enclosures were later added to the complex. The enclosures continue beyond the excavated area and cropmarks suggest further enclosures nearby.

A total of 745 sherds of Roman pottery was found at this site, and analysis of vessel types suggests a settlement of modest status. Pottery

and radiocarbon dating shows that the Roman features are mainly mid-second to early third century in date. Although the relatively small quantity of pottery of late first- and early second-century date suggests a low level of activity then, the site almost certainly saw continuous occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period. There is also some late third- or early fourth-century pottery, but indicating a lower level of activity than in the mid second to early third centuries. Soil conditions precluded survival of animal bone but the enclosures and droeways suggest that this site, like that at Longdales Road, concentrated on stock-rearing. This is supported by the small quantity of charred grain, with no processing waste, found in Roman features compared to that from the Iron Age enclosure.

Just outside the Birmingham city boundary at Wishaw Hall Farm in Warwickshire (Trevvarthen 2008) a Roman field boundary follows a two-phase Iron Age boundary. A rectangular enclosure to the south was constructed in the middle of the second century, with occupation continuing through the third century and into the fourth. There was a droeway to the north of the enclosure. The proportion of fine wares in the 823 sherds of pottery from this site suggests that it had a relatively high status. Also just outside the Birmingham city boundary, a Romano-British timber and clay structure with associated pits was found under the east bailey rampart of the motte-and-bailey castle at Castle Bromwich in Solihull, overlooking a crossing of the River Tame (Ford 1971). At Damson Way in Solihull, recent excavations revealed a rectangular stone-built building or buildings surrounded by a field system (Daniel 2017).

Excavations on a site of predominantly medieval date at Priors' Street in Coventry city centre revealed a ditch, possibly enclosing a farmstead, which contained Roman grey ware, an arm ring, two brooches and animal bone. Roman pottery, but no identifiable Roman features, has been found in excavation at some other sites in the county. The thirteen sherds of Roman pottery from medieval contexts in two adjacent excavations in the Bull Ring in Birmingham city centre (Rátkai 2009, 174; Hodder *et al.* 2009, 306) are, like the fieldwalking finds from Sutton Coldfield, a small but locally significant quantity and hint at a farmstead here. Similarly, some Roman pottery, including first- to second-century types, found in features of medieval and later date in excavations at the Saracen's Head in King's Norton

village centre (Rátkai 2011, 118) suggest a nearby settlement, but the single pot found alongside Westhill Road nearby is difficult to interpret. Nine sherds of pottery, including grey ware and buff ware, were exposed in a boundary bank in Stivichall in Coventry. Although it is obviously important not to overstate their significance, these small groups of pottery do demonstrate the extent of activity in the Roman period in the area and may indicate the presence of actual features, as at Northfield, described above.

Late first- and early second-century pottery at the second-century kiln site in Perry Barr (Hughes 1961) shows that the site was occupied before the kiln was established. Small quantities of Roman pottery and part of a fibula brooch found in excavations at Sandwell Priory (Hodder 1991, 23–4) may indicate a settlement on the site. The medieval priory may have been established within a pre-existing double-ditched enclosure, potentially Iron Age or Roman in date (Hewitt and Hodder 1988, 23). The Roman pottery and first-century coins found at the hillfort at Castle Old Fort (Willmore 1887, 11) indicate visits and at least temporary occupation in the Roman period. There are antiquarian accounts of discoveries of Roman pottery in Bushbury and elsewhere in Wolverhampton (Garner 1844, 70). Cropmark evidence for all periods is sparse both because there are relatively small areas of open space in the county as a whole, much of is grassland rather than arable, and because little aerial reconnaissance has been undertaken specifically for archaeological purposes. However, features of possible Roman or Iron Age date can be detected on aerial photographs such as two joined rectangular enclosures at Spreading Tree Hill in Sutton Coldfield (Birmingham City Council 2013, 10).

Pottery is likely to be a more reliable indicator of the location of settlements than chance finds of coins, but the latter are abundant in the built-up part of the county, where they have been found mainly during gardening or construction work, and therefore demand consideration. In the Birmingham HER, 92 out of a total of just over 150 Roman records are coins, mainly single coins, and there are four hoards, not all verifiable. The proportion is similar in the Black Country: 41 of a total of 122 Roman records in the Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton HERs combined are single coins or hoards. Although a few of the coins may be recent losses, this cannot

explain them all. The hoards in particular may indicate nearby settlements: one hoard was found close to the Roman settlement whose location is inferred from the results of fieldwalking at Wiggins Hill (Chattock 1884, 194, 235) and another was found close to the excavated Wishaw Hall Farm site just outside the county (Booth 2008, 527). Another chance find, a metalwork hoard from Pedmore Hall near Stourbridge, consisted of jewellery including finger rings, toe rings, armlets, necklaces and coins of second century date and suggests a high-status owner (Hall and Yarwood-Smith 1995, 48).

Landscape and land use

The environmental evidence is direct, such as that provided by pollen or seeds, and indirect, i.e. what can be inferred from the archaeological evidence. Off-site palaeoenvironmental evidence dating to the Roman period in the area has been obtained from the upper part of a palaeochannel near the River Tame in Perry Barr, north Birmingham, and from a palaeochannel in Bournville in the south of the city. The Perry Barr deposit was radiocarbon-dated to calAD 240–420 and contained pollen of cornflower (a weed of arable fields) and wetland grasses, and dung beetles indicating grazing animals in the vicinity (Tetlow *et al.* 2008). The infill of the Bournville palaeochannel, which accumulated from the late Mesolithic or early Neolithic until calAD 400–560, was less informative, indicating woodland and open marsh throughout the sequence, with no significant change over time (Rann 2012).

The buried soil under the Roman road in Sutton Park (Walker 1940) has a podzol profile, suggesting heath or possibly woodland when the road was constructed, in the middle of the first century AD. Turves used in the later fort rampart at Metchley contained pollen of woodland, heath and grassland (Jones 2002, 107–8). Plant remains from a post-pit of the earliest phase of the fort are dominated by grassy material, and plants typical of wet grassland environments in a later phase were probably collected from the vicinity of the fort (Jones forthcoming). Soil erosion on the west side of the fort may have resulted from removal of turf for rampart construction (Jones 2011, 105). The large quantities of timber required for building the various phases of the Roman fort would have involved felling substantial numbers of trees: if they were obtained in the vicinity of the site this

would have had a major impact on the local environment. Wood for wattles in the fort's buildings could have come from coppiced woodland in the vicinity of the site, and the fuel for the pottery kilns at Sherifoot Lane and Perry Barr is similarly likely to have been obtained from managed woodland nearby. Bracken impressions in the fired clay dome of the oven of the pottery kiln at Sherifoot Lane indicate that there was heathland close to the site (Evans *et al.* 2014).

At Metchley fort, pollen in the fill of the ditches in the fort's later phases, associated with radiocarbon dates ranging from calAD 50–90, indicated an environment of open scrub and scrubby woodland containing hazel and some oak and lime, together with grasses and ribwort plantain, and alder and sedges which would have grown in damp conditions in and around the ditches (Greig in Jones 2012; Jones forthcoming) and a pollen sequence from another ditch fill on the site shows the development first of willow and hawthorn scrub, then ash and oak woodland following the fort's abandonment (Greig in Jones 2005, 74–80). However, as noted above, the fill of a recut ditch on the west of the fort was overlain by a cultivated soil.

Charred wheat and barley at Metchley fort may have derived from cereals grown locally but absence of chaff shows that perhaps not surprisingly it arrived at the site as processed grain, while pips of grapes and figs indicate exotic imports from further afield. Charred spelt wheat from the latest phase at Longdales Road may have been a crop grown on the site following abandonment of the earlier enclosure complex, and the weeds at Parson's Hill suggest cultivated land. The identification through fieldwalking in both Sutton Coldfield and Lutley of an extensive distribution of small quantities of pottery, often just one or two sherds, beyond the obvious concentrations is likely to be the result of manuring arable land with domestic debris. However, the small quantity of charred grain at Langley Mill Farm, as at Metchley fort, does not contain processing waste and was therefore grown elsewhere: the rotary querns found on this site were used to mill the acquired grain (Figure 8.7).

Survival of animal bone is generally poor on the excavated sites, but livestock management, whether for horses, cattle or sheep, is implied by the ditched enclosures, funnelling ditches and roadside plots at Longdales Road, the ditched enclosures at Langley Mill Farm and the annexes, funnelling ditches and fencing at Metchley. Extensive

areas of heathland, grassland and wood pasture for grazing, and possibly hay meadows, would be required to feed the stock and this would give rise to a relatively low density of settlement. The evidence from Longdales Road and the Burrells hints at an extensively enclosed landscape but, as in later periods, there is also likely to have been unenclosed land which was used for rough grazing, possibly seasonally, and shared by several farms. Land that became the medieval deer park at Sutton Park and adjoining land that remained unenclosed until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may be an example of this (Hodder 2013, 61–7).

As a result of extensive evaluation in locations where archaeological remains would be expected to survive, it is possible to identify ‘blank’ areas where there are no Roman features nor scatters of pottery indicating occupation sites or arable land manured with domestic refuse which would lead to incidental deposition of pottery, and might therefore have been pasture or woodland. These include Peddimore in Sutton Coldfield (Mould 1998) where streamside resources could have been exploited by the nearby settlement inferred from pottery at Wiggins Hill; Perry Barr near the River Tame where evaluation revealed no features (Halsted 2006) but the environmental evidence described above indicates wet grassland and grazing animals; and land sloping down to a stream on the other side of Ryknield Street from the enclosures and roadside plots at Longdales Road (Edwards and Jackson 1998). In Barston, only a small amount of Roman pottery was found in the lowlying land near the River Blythe in the south of the parish, suggesting that it was used as woodland, pasture or meadow, while arable land lay around the settlement inferred by the Roman pottery concentration at Eastcote, in the north of the parish (above; Burnett 2008).

Kilns and quarries

Pottery production sites have been found at Perry Barr and at Sherifoot Lane in Sutton Coldfield, both of which are second century in date. At Perry Barr wasters and fire-bars were found, and at Sherifoot Lane there were a waster-filled pit, a stokehole and a kiln oven which included remains of a clay wall, a clay dome and an unusual arrangement of double arches of sun-dried clay bricks supporting a floor (Hughes 1961; Booth 1986, 31; 1996, 50; Hodder

2004, 70–6; Evans *et al.* 2014; [Figure 8.8](#)). The main products of the Sherifoot Lane kiln were jars and bowls, including carinated bowls. Other vessel forms made there included tankards, flagons, beakers, dishes and mortaria, while the Perry Barr kiln produced jars, bowls and tankards. Both sites are likely to be outliers of the well-known Mancetter-Hartshill industry of north Warwickshire, where similar vessel forms were made (Booth 1986). The carinated bowls and the structure of the Sherifoot Lane kiln suggest a military tradition and a south-eastern influence – the potter may have moved to Sherifoot Lane from London, Verulamium or Colchester – but the tankards are a characteristic vessel form of the more local Severn Valley ware.

The Sherifoot Lane kiln was not near an obvious clay source but proximity to fuel was probably more important. It is near Hill Wood, which was an extensive coppiced wood in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The Perry Barr site is similarly near a coppiced wood recorded in the eighteenth century, Butlers Coppice. The products of the kilns met local markets: for example, Sherifoot Lane products have been identified at Coleshill (Booth 2005, 162–3) and sites on the M6 Toll motorway (Leary 2008, 476–7). Neither the Perry Barr nor the Sherifoot Lane site is on a known Roman road line. The Perry Barr site is just under a kilometre from Ryknield Street and the Sherifoot Lane site is over two kilometres from Ryknield Street, but the latter is near a medieval road line which follows a natural ridge and could have been a route in use during the Roman period (Hodder 2004, 63).

At both the kiln sites so far known, structures are likely to extend beyond those excavated, and there may well have been further kilns in the area. At Metchley some mortaria were probably made in or close to the first century fort, possibly in a western annexe where a kiln or oven was located; some possible kiln furniture was found in the annexe ditch (Jones 2011, 103; Macey-Bracken in Jones 2011, 25–6). The presence of kilns at other sites is suggested by a waster and the range of fabric variants at Longdales Road (Evans in Jones *et al.* 2008, 51, 68, 88), the discovery of a large quantity of wasters in Olton, Solihull, just outside the present Birmingham boundary (Solihull HER, MSI6335) and a nineteenth-century discovery of what was thought to be a Roman pottery or tile kiln in Harmalls Lane in Coventry.

Fossils in limestone used as cobbles surfacing a corridor and in

lime used in mortar in the Roman bath house at Wall in the second century show that they are Wenlock limestone, which outcrops on the north-eastern side of Walsall, only six miles away (Thorpe 1956). Antiquarian accounts refer to discoveries of what were thought to be Roman tools during nineteenth-century limestone quarrying here (Willmore 1892, 112), and Roman coins and an unrecorded type of brooch were found at Linley Farm near Rushall (Shaw 1798, 35), an area where limestone has been quarried in recent times. Exploitation of this resource in the Roman period is not unlikely, but any evidence for it would probably have been removed by more recent quarrying. Like the pottery kilns, the sources of limestone are not on any known Roman roads but imply the existence of tracks suitable for transporting this bulky material.



Figure 8.7 Langley Mill Farm: rotary quern (Photograph: Mike Hodder)



Figure 8.8 Sherifoot Lane: pottery kiln, with stokehole, flue and oven, and adjoining pit (Photograph: Mike Hodder)

The area's sandstone was used in many medieval and later buildings but does not seem to have been exploited in the Roman period: the only Roman structures so far found in the area in which this material is used are ovens and hearths at Metchley fort (a building, or buildings, with sandstone walls or wall footings has recently been excavated in Solihull (Daniel 2017)). At Metchley stone could have been obtained from glacial drift or from sandstone bedrock which occurs close to the surface near this site. The source of coal found in Roman contexts at Metchley (Jones 2005, 88) is unknown but might have been the Black Country, where it occurs near to the surface in several places and can be extracted by shallow excavation. There is as yet no evidence from the Black Country itself for exploitation of coal, or of iron ore, in the Roman period, but as with limestone quarrying any evidence for this is likely to have been removed by intensive later activity.

Overview

Although current evidence of Iron Age activity in the county in general is sparse, there was almost certainly continuity of occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period at Langley Mill Farm,

Wishaw Hall Farm, Sidens Hill and possibly at Castle Old Fort and the banjo enclosure at the University of Warwick, and some pottery from Metchley fort may be Iron Age in date. The imposition of forts and a military road system on the Iron Age landscape was followed by the establishment in the first century of new settlements without Iron Age antecedents, some of which lay on or close to a Roman road, such as Longdales Road, Parson's Hill, Northfield, and Perry Barr (on the site of the later kiln). However, intercut gullies of late Iron Age date found recently at Walkers Heath, not far from the Longdales Road and Parson's Hill sites, show that these sites were not established in an empty, unexploited, landscape (Coutts 2013). Settlements at Lutley, Barston and Allesley lay away from known road lines.

Other than at Metchley fort, the level of first-century activity was low; the peak of Roman activity at Wishaw Hall Farm, Longdales Road and the Lutley area seems to have been from the early- to mid-second century into the early to mid-third century. The excavated evidence suggests a concentration on stock-rearing, possibly replacing mixed farming practised in the Iron Age. Farmsteads about a kilometre apart lay in an extensively managed landscape consisting of enclosed fields and paddocks, heathland, grassland, wood pasture and probably woodland managed as coppice. Whatever the animals involved, whether the sites were cattle ranches, sheep runs or horse studs, these enterprises were meeting the demands of consumers through markets at places like Wall and Alcester. Woodland may have been managed, and livestock reared, for use of their products elsewhere as well as within the area itself, possibly partly to supply military garrisons to the north and west, as part of the 'resource-procurement zone' suggested by Esmonde Cleary (2011, particularly 131 and 139). The presence of settlements in the area would themselves have encouraged the establishment of local pottery manufacturing enterprises, possibly by potters moving here from other regions. At the same time, Walsall's limestone was probably being exploited.

Consideration of the material culture of the known sites, represented principally by pottery, brings out contrasts between and within different parts of the area. Comparison of total quantities of pottery from different sites is of course a crude measure without detailed consideration of areas excavated or fieldwalked, date ranges and average sherd size, but it does enable some comparison between

excavated sites and those investigated by fieldwalking: the larger number of sherds resulting from greater fragmentation of pottery in the ploughsoil is more than offset by the fact that the ploughsoil assemblage is only part, possibly a fairly small part, of the total pottery on the site.

There is a marked difference between the quantities of pottery at the sites in the south of the area, such as Longdales Road, Lutley and Sidens Hill, and those in the north, such as Langley Mill Farm, Wishaw Hall Farm, Over Green and Wiggins Hill. This might reflect the availability of pottery in that Severn Valley and Malvernian wares, the main types represented, may have been more difficult or more expensive to obtain in the north of the area, particularly away from roads. The local pottery enterprises at Perry Barr and Sherifoot Lane may have developed in response to this. There might also have been cultural differences. Although it is difficult to identify *civitas* boundaries, Longdales Road and the sites in the Lutley area are likely to have been within and possibly near the boundary of Dobunnica territory, more Romanised than the northern sites. The variation in site status represented by pottery assemblages places Sidens Hill above Lutley, Oldnall and Longdales Road, and Wishaw Hall Farm above Langley Mill Farm. Another reason for variation may be the economic basis of different sites: those in the Lutley area might have had mixed farming regimes rather than the concentration on stock-rearing inferred on the excavated sites. The Pedmore hoard may indicate the location of a further as yet undiscovered high status site and, as noted above, the building materials found at Walsgrove and Allesley suggest high-status structures.

The structural sequence at Metchley indicates that activity on the site, using the visible but reduced fort defences and probably related to stock management, continued for some time after the military abandonment of the fort, but woodland regeneration in the late second or third century suggests a reduction in intensity of land use. The absence of any Roman pottery later in date than the second century suggests that any associated dwelling after that time was outside the excavated areas or perhaps at some distance from the former fort. Pottery shows that occupation of the Lutley sites, Longdales Road, Langley Mill Farm and Wishaw Hall Farm continued into the fourth century but that the level of activity was much

reduced. The form and therefore presumably the function and status of Longdales Road changes in the later third century, and the same may have happened at Langley Mill Farm. The earlier livestock enterprises at both of these sites seem to have been scaled down, possibly in response to changing demands and reduced markets. Their specialisation would have made them particularly vulnerable to such changes.

Although the undated latest phases at Metchley fort may be post-Roman, the only dateable archaeological evidence of late Roman or early post-Roman date from the known sites is a single sherd of pottery from Longdales Road, and indeed there is hardly any Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence from the area as a whole (e.g. Hodder 2004, 77–80). The Langley Mill Farm site was certainly abandoned by the medieval period. It lies on what was regarded as marginal land in the medieval and post-medieval periods, when it was unenclosed common land used as rough pasture. Abandonment or change of use of the Burrells field system at the end of the Roman period is indicated by medieval assarting of the area, and woodland may have spread over at least part of the Rykniel Street. An estate boundary in a charter of AD 957 includes part of this road and *straet lea*, now Streetly Wood in Sutton Park which extends over the road (Hooke 1983, 100–3). However, the part of Rykniel Street adjoining the Longdales Road site is still in use. The site itself lies next to Lilycroft Farm, known from documentary evidence to have been there by the fourteenth century, and occupies a spur of land which formed an estate mentioned in 669, suggesting possible continuity of occupation (Jones *et al.* 2008, 91). Similarly, the concentrations of Roman pottery at Over Green and Wiggins Hill are close to medieval settlements and the Roman pottery from the Saracen's Head and the Bull Ring was found in excavation of medieval settlements.

Future research and curation

Existing evidence suggests that there was a large number of Roman settlements in West Midlands county, as little as a kilometre apart from each other. In the north of the area they may have used relatively little pottery, making them difficult to locate by fieldwalking. Some sites are close to known Roman roads, therefore road lines where known can be used to predict the sites of these

settlements to some extent. This demonstrates both the importance of the work of the Birmingham Roman Roads Research Project in identifying road lines, and the implications of modern development near Roman road lines where remains of such sites may survive. However, the foci of 'roadside' settlements may have been set back some distance from the road frontage, such as at Longdales Road and Northfield. The proximity of Roman settlement sites to medieval sites might make the former difficult to detect, but those undertaking excavation on such sites need to be aware of the possibility of residual Roman pottery or other objects, even if features do not survive.

Open spaces within the conurbation, including domestic gardens, are particularly important for the survival of sites and even landscapes of the Roman period, as for other periods. Existing aerial photographs, even those not taken specifically for archaeological purposes, should be examined, and more aerial reconnaissance should be undertaken of existing agricultural land and other open areas which have not hitherto been flown for specifically archaeological purposes. The area has not so far been included in English Heritage's National Mapping Programme. LiDAR will be of particular value in detecting sites in wooded areas, which cannot be recognised by aerial photography, as well as slight earthworks in open land. Fieldwalking should be undertaken on all available areas, and this method should be able to locate sites occupied in the Roman period, although surprisingly the Langley Mill Farm site was not found in this way. Fieldwalking methods need to take account of the relatively small quantity of pottery normally found, even in excavation, on Roman sites in the north of the area; widely spaced traverses are not appropriate. Geophysical survey, where feasible, and evaluation trenching should always be required as part of consideration of development proposals affecting open spaces. On- or off-site deposits likely to contain palaeoenvironmental data should be identified, sampled, analysed and dated.

Where they lie within the part of the conurbation that is now built-up, Roman sites obviously cannot be located by fieldwalking but may be found by increasing public awareness. Much Roman pottery has probably been found in suburban gardens but has not been recognised as old by its finders because of the large quantities of modern debris and the expectation that everything found is likely to be recent in

date. The pottery production sites at Perry Barr and Sherifoot Lane were both discovered by chance in gardens.

The significance of isolated finds of coins and other metalwork is unclear and needs to be assessed. More work could be done on the interpretation of chance finds of coins. This would include examining the circumstances of finding; assessing the likelihood that particular finds are recent losses, from the circumstances of discovery or the coin type; and determining whether the loss pattern by coin date across the area as a whole is consistent with that in the rest of the country.

Full analysis and publication of the existing data is needed, including assemblages found in fieldwalking. As the bibliography shows, most sites excavated recently as part of development have now been published. Final publication of the recent excavations at Metchley fort is imminent (Jones forthcoming) and, following pottery analysis to complete post-excavation work, a full report on the Sherifoot Lane pottery kiln has recently been published (Evans *et al.* 2014).

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Note: Where no reference is cited in the text, information is from the appropriate Historic Environment Record: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall or Wolverhampton.

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The distribution of Roman coins in the West Midlands: a regional analysis

Sarah Deacon

Introduction

Antiquarians and archaeologists have been studying coins, specifically Roman ones, for centuries and they are frequently found on archaeological sites across the country. Despite this, it is argued that the way in which they are used is often limited (Kemmers and Myberg 2011). It has been noted that coins are often not published in full in excavation reports and that it is often the case that their main role is to provide dates for contexts and sites and for major events in the history of the province (Kemmers and Myberg 2011, 88; Walton 2011, 19). It is assumed, therefore, that because so many coins are found their role is fully understood (Walton 2011, 18). As a result, the study of coins has been perceived to have little importance to mainstream archaeology. Despite this view, coins can be used as a means to investigate wider archaeological themes and scholars such as Richard Reece and John Casey have been influential in developing and applying techniques for this purpose (e.g. Reece 1972; Casey 1974; Reece 1987; Reece 1991; Reece 1995; Reece 2002). By examining coin data from a wider perspective, it is possible to make meaningful interpretations across a wide spatial range: site specific; regional; and provincial.

This paper aims to utilise the Roman coin data produced by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in order to analyse the regional distribution within the West Midlands. Regional analyses of Roman coins found mainly on sites have been carried out, for example, in

Norfolk (Davies and Gregory 1991) and in Wiltshire (Moorhead 2001), but there are few other examples of similar studies. Walton (2011; 2012) undertook a study of the Roman coin data recorded by the PAS across England and Wales. Her thesis has begun to pave the way for further work allowing detailed regional analysis. This paper, therefore, focuses on data from Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire in order to examine the chronological distribution of Roman coins across the region.

The study does not attempt to consider either those stray finds already included in the various county Historic Environment Records (HER) or excavated coins. This is a conscious decision based on a number of reasons. The stray finds include records of antiquarian finds of coins incorporated into the HERs for each county. These entries derive from the Ordnance Survey card-index database incorporated into county Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) when they were first founded in 1974. The location of these finds is often uncertain and even when the coins can be associated with particular reigns, there is little confidence in the identification of the individual coins. In the over two decades between 1974 and 1996, at which date the PAS was established, further stray finds, often reasonably well-identified and located, were incorporated into the record. These were, however, infrequent in number and it is true to say that numerically a far greater number of finds has been made in the years following the establishment of the PAS. For Herefordshire, for instance, 269 individual records of coin finds exist (importantly, these are not just single finds – these numbers include hoards as single entries). Of these, 73 are records predating the PAS and the remaining 196 are entries derived from the PAS. These latter entries have two advantages: their provenance is generally good, and they are often identified to a high degree of accuracy, when the coin preservation allows it. It is also the case that this larger group of coins is bound to be more statistically representative, both of the coins circulating in the region and of coin use more generally over the Roman period. This is because the searching for these coins has been conducted in a non-systematic way.

It might have been possible to incorporate the existing stray finds, but most would have to have been excluded from the periodisation

that is a function of current coin recording procedures, including this paper. Without this layer of data, the coins become no more than points in the landscape where a Roman coin was dropped at some unknown point in time, and not necessarily in the Roman period. It is also the case that modern losses, brought home by tourists or soldiers returning from service abroad, may well be contaminating the record. In the Black County database, for instance, there are examples of Alexandrian tetradrachms (which never circulated outside of Egypt in the Roman period); of Roman provincial coins which are also extremely rare in Romano-British contexts; and lastly there is one group of seven coins, all with different patinas, found in association with a seventeenth-century token which are thought to have been brought together, and lost, in modern times (Black Country HER Record 8876). While some of the PAS finds may also be of this character, in the larger sample that the PAS finds represent, this is less of a statistical issue.

Excavated finds represent a second excluded group. These can form a very significant cluster of data, usually highly stratified but also heavily localised. The inclusion of the data from Wroxeter, for instance, where in the region of 12,000 stratified coins are known from the excavations there (John Casey, pers. comm.), would severely skew the spatial patterning of the data to no great advantage. What would be useful, however, would be to compare the excavated data against the PAS data reported on here. It has not been possible to do this as, unfortunately, the two datasets are not compatible. The largest of the modern stratified groups from Wroxeter, from the baths and baths basilica excavations, were recorded by John Casey and Richard Brickstock (Brickstock and Casey 1997; 2000; 2002). They naturally worked to the Casey periodisation (cf. Brickstock and Casey 2000). The PAS data have been recorded by the similar, but still different, periodisation adopted by Richard Reece (see below), so one of the two groups would need to be adjusted and recalculated to match the other. This is clearly an important project, but not one attempted here. Accordingly, this paper will just focus on the PAS data, allowing us to compare the results with the national reporting undertaken by Philippa Walton (2012).

Reece periods and the British mean

In order to study coins chronologically, Richard Reece developed a framework of 21 divisions. Through this he established that there was a basic uniformity in the coin profiles of sites in Britain. Starting with 14 sites (Reece 1972), he developed a British Mean before extending his research to a total of 140 sites (Reece 1995). The British Mean has now become the benchmark against which the interpretation of coin losses from individual sites should be compared (Reece 1996, 141). This ensures that inappropriate, site-specific interpretations are not drawn from the quantities of coins found from different periods (Brindle 2011, 99).

It has been noted that one should use Reece's British Mean with care because it places an emphasis on urban, high-status and military sites rather than rural ones (Moorhead 2010, 143). The PAS data, however, tends to originate mainly from rural sites and for this reason Walton calculated the PAS mean and compared it to the British Mean (Worrell *et al.* 2011, 434). Whilst broadly similar, there are some differences such as in Period 21, AD 364–78. This is due to Reece's inclusion of a dataset from Richborough which contained a vast number from this single Period (Walton 2011, 28–9). The mean from the PAS West Midlands region was also calculated and has been plotted alongside the British Mean and the PAS Mean for comparison (Figure 9.1).

This shows that the West Midlands mean is very similar to the PAS Mean, which is not surprising considering they are comprised of the same type of data. In fact data from the West Midlands was used to form the PAS mean. The point where there is most dissimilarity is Period I, pre-AD 41, the pre-Claudian age. There are more coins from this time in the West Midlands than the means from the rest of the country. Altogether, the mean coin loss values indicate that the data from the West Midlands reflects a rural pattern that is similar to the PAS mean, but with increased early coinage reflecting the military aspect of the area. The reduced later coinage may be related to the suppression of the values, but it still indicates the presence of different types of activity such as temples and villas.

Statistical methodology

The data was downloaded from the PAS database on 26 May 2012 as a .csv file and was accessed and cleaned in Microsoft Excel. Records

were deleted if they were not suitable for publication. The dataset, therefore, has records of 5135 coins from 345 parishes, 3136 of which fit into the 21 Reece Periods.

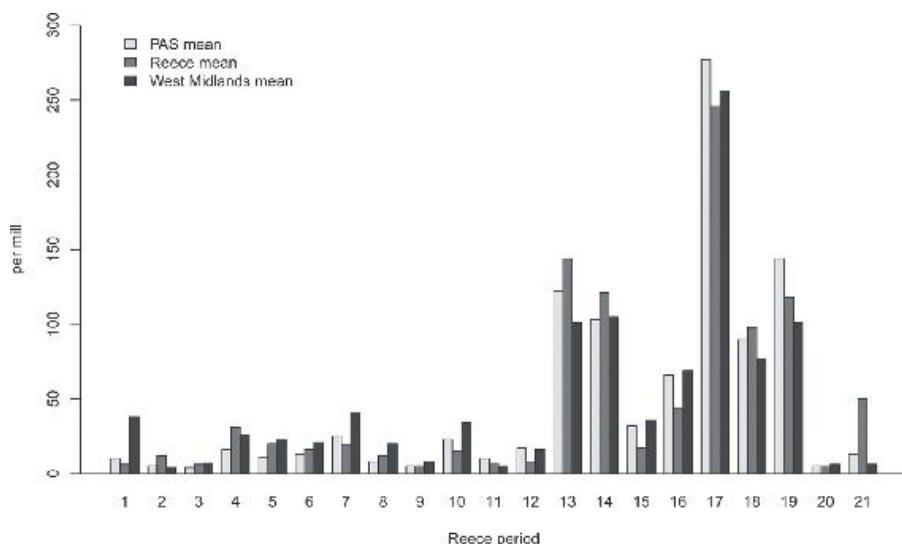


Figure 9.1 The West Midlands Mean compared to the British and PAS Means using per mill coin values. Data from Philippa Walton (pers. comm. 2012)

The PAS data, once cleaned, were passed to Kris Lockyear to enact formal statistical analyses. He performed Dmax-Based Cluster and Correspondence Analyses, the results of which are discussed below (Lockyear 2012). These analyses have been demonstrated to be effective by Lockyear (2000; 2007) and a full methodology of the techniques used is described there. Cluster Analysis was also utilised by Walton (2011) in her study. Of the 345 parishes that contained coins, only 44 have 20 or more coins recorded, and only 24 parishes have more than 20 coins identified by Reece Period (Lockyear 2012, 1). It is these data from these 24 parishes, therefore, on which the analyses were performed. Consequently the total number of coins used for these analyses is 2149, 41.7% of the original dataset. Table 9.1 shows a list of the parishes used and their identification codes which will be used in the remainder of this study. The 24 parishes were added to Richard Reece's 140 sites (1991) and also the data from Westhawk Farm (Guest 2008), London Colchester House (Garrard 2010), and the Classis fort at Dover (Philp 1981, 119–21). The Dmax-based Cluster Analysis used the R statistical package and the results

were then exported to Microsoft Excel and Access (Lockyear 2012, 3).

Correspondence Analysis (CA) is a statistical technique that allows multiple variables to be compared and is suitable for the analysis of positive integer data such as coin assemblages (Lockyear 2012, 5). It has been used with success by Lockyear in numismatic study (2000; 2007). The analyses were undertaken using Canaco and the plots were created in Canodraw. The output from the FactoMineR package was run in R through a SimsimCA3D routine and the tables were then exported into Excel (Lockyear 2012, 6). These statistical analyses allowed a thorough examination of the data and a detailed examination of the results will be discussed below.

Dmax-based cluster analysis

The aim of this method is to divide the data into groups. All the results from this statistical analysis were derived from Lockyear (2012). A dendrogram of all of the sites was created, (see [Figure 9.2](#)), and it was decided to cut it at a dissimilarity of 16 so that it could be compared with previously published analyses (Lockyear 2000; cf. 2012).

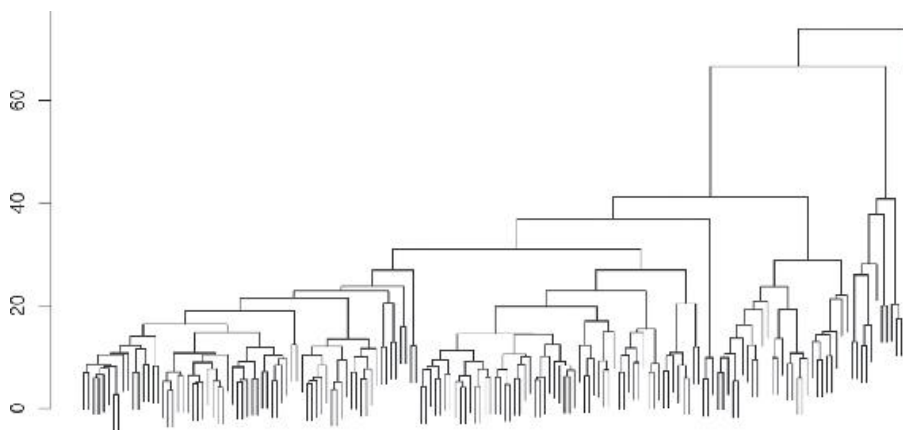


Figure 9.2 Dendrogram from Dmax-based cluster analysis (Lockyear 2012)

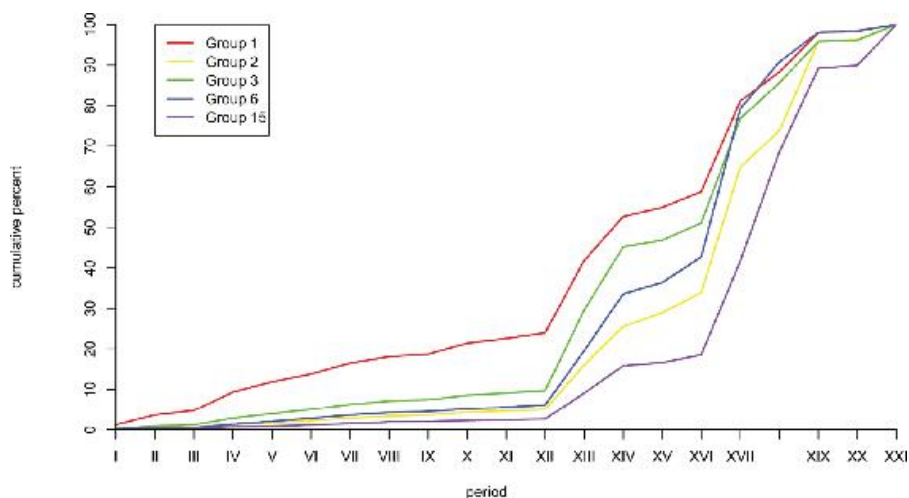


Figure 9.3 The cumulative frequency of groups 1, 2, 3, 6 and 15 (from Lockyear 2012, 5)

Cutting at 16 led to the creation of 34 groups. In the analysis of Reece's 140 sites, Lockyear (2000) used the same statistical technique and obtained 24 clusters which were labelled *a* to *x*. Of the 34 groups created with the addition of the PAS data, 12 of these only contained one member. These included seven sites from the published group, along with Westhawk Farm, the Classis Fort at Dover and the parishes of Wall (wal), Swindon (swi) and Great Witley (wit). These five parishes/sites all contain unusually high quantities of early coinage. These parishes will be discussed in more detail below. Of the remaining 22 groups, 90 sites are contained within the four biggest groups: 1, 2, 3 and 6. Group 1 is exactly the same as the previously published cluster *a* with the addition of the parish of Alcester (alc). Group 2 is very similar to cluster *c*, with the addition of the parishes of Aston Cantlow (ast), Bidford-on-Avon (bid), Kineton (kin) and Temple Grafton (grf), but Verulamium theatre (ver t) moves to Group 6. Group 3 is similar to cluster *b*, with the addition of the parishes of Brailes (bra), Honington (hon) and Cleeve Prior (cle). Group 6 contains almost all cluster *d*, along with Verulamium theatre from *c*, three sites from *b* and the parishes of Bredon (brd), Radford Semele (rad) and Offenham (off).

Table 9.1 List of parishes used in analyses (from Lockyear 2012, 2)

<i>Code</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Total coins</i>	<i>Total Reece</i>	<i>Group</i>
wes	Weston under Penyard	Herefordshire	67	50	4
wor	Worfield	Shropshire	31	21	30
ila	Ilam	Staffordshire	91	60	30
swi	Swindon	Staffordshire	29	24	31
wal	Wall	Staffordshire	71	45	32
alc	Alcester	Warwickshire	299	141	1
ast	Aston Cantlow	Warwickshire	40	21	2
bid	Bidford-on- Avon	Warwickshire	122	197	2
bra	Brailes	Warwickshire	249	76	3
brn	Brandon and Bretford	Warwickshire	23	23	19
har	Harbury	Warwickshire	107	74	33
hon	Honington	Warwickshire	226	120	3
kin	Kineton	Warwickshire	103	77	2
prm	Princethorpe	Warwickshire	194	93	17
rad	Radford Semele	Warwickshire	851	803	6
grf	Temple Grafton	Warwickshire	76	33	2
wel	Wellford-on- Avon	Warwickshire	83	37	23
bic	Bickmarsh	Worcestershire	131	91	15
brd	Bredon	Worcestershire	29	24	6
cle	Cleeve Prior	Worcestershire	58	31	3
wit	Great Witley	Worcestershire	27	22	34
ink	Inkberrow	Worcestershire	70	31	33
lit	North and Middle Littleton	Worcestershire	69	23	15
off	Offenham	Worcestershire	40	32	6

Of the remaining smaller groups, Weston-under-Penyard (wes) is in Group 4, which is similar to cluster *e*; Bickmarsh (bic) and North

and Middle Littleton (lit) are in Group 15, which is exactly the same as cluster *j* with the addition of London Colchester House (LonCH). Group 17 contains two rural sites, Caistor-by-Norwich, which it has been argued acts like a rural site (Lockyear 2012, 4), and the parish of Princethorpe (prn). Group 19 contains one villa site, one rural site, and the parish of Brandon and Bretford (brn); Group 23 contains one military site and the parish of Welford-on-Avon (wel); Group 30 only contains the parishes of Worfield (wor) and Ilam (ila); Group 33 consists of the parishes of Harbury (har) and Inkberrow (ink).

It appears, therefore, that many of the parishes from the West Midlands are in 'clusters' that comprise only one or two parishes. Lockyear (2012, 4) suggests that there may be three possible reasons for this. First, a single parish may contain more than one site and this would affect the profiles produced. Second, due to the nature of the data, some of the profiles are fairly small and random variation could become an issue. Finally, some of the parishes have a number of poorly identified coins so accurate profiles are unable to be produced. Despite this, 13 of the parishes are in groups 1, 2, 3, 6 or 15 and these will be examined in more detail.

Figure 9.3 shows a graph of the average cumulative frequency of groups 1, 2, 3, 6 and 15 by Reece Period. It shows that Group 1 has a higher frequency of early coinage than the others. Group 1 is one that consists of mainly *civitas* capital sites with the addition of two villas, two rural sites and one military site (Lockyear 2012, 4). Group 3 has less early coinage, but has the highest quantities of the radiate coinage of Reece Periods XIII to XIV. Group 3 is also largely dominated by *civitas* capital sites. Group 6 has a large proportion of coinage from Periods XVII to XIX, but very little from Periods XX to XXI and is dominated by rural and villa sites. Group 2 contains assemblages from rural sites, temples and villas and has more coinage from Periods XVII to XIX than Group 6. Finally, Group 15 has a much larger proportion of Periods XVII to XIX, as well as the highest quantity of coins from Period XXI. These groups will now be examined in turn and the results from the cluster analysis will be compared to the information on the relevant HER in order to ascertain whether these are possible new sites or if previous archaeological work has been carried out in the area.

Group 1

As noted above, Group 1 contains a large amount of early coinage and the sites placed in it are mainly *civitas* capitals. The fact that the parish of Alcester is placed in this group and has a largely urban profile is not surprising since it contains the Roman town of Alcester which has been well documented in the past (e.g. Booth 1980; Mahany 1995) and many of the coins from the PAS come from near the site. Alcester was originally a Roman fort, surrounded by a defensive rampart, and it shows evidence of industrial and residential zones as well as several cemeteries (Warwickshire HER 2012a). This therefore gives confirmation of the statistical technique and its grouping of the parishes.

Group 2

Group 2 consists of a few different types of sites including rural sites, temples and villas. It is therefore difficult to assign the four parishes – Aston Cantlow (ast), Temple Grafton (grf), Bidford-on-Avon (bid) and Kineton (kin) – a specific site type from this statistical analysis. The relevant HERs also have little information regarding any of these parishes with the exception of Bidford-on-Avon. Whilst Temple Grafton and Kineton have a few noted findspots on the HER, Bidford-on-Avon has multiple entries that are scattered across the parish. As the PAS data is also scattered, this could represent a small settlement site. In the past Reece has often categorised small towns as rural sites (Lockyear 2012, 14), and this would fit with the coin distribution from Bidford-on-Avon.

Group 3

This group is also dominated by *civitas* capitals. Two of the parishes placed in this group, Brailes (bra) and Cleeve Prior (cle), have some evidence of settlements recorded on the relevant HER (Warwickshire HER 2012b; Worcestershire HER 2012a). The parish of Honington (hon), however, has no other information. All 226 coins from this parish are from the same grid reference, and this site therefore needs more work in order to understand the archaeology of the area. The parish of Brailes has had some previous excavation (Blunt 1973), and there are two areas recorded as sites of possible settlement in the

parish. The coins from the PAS database are scattered around the area. However, this is not surprising if it is to be considered an urban area. Cleeve Prior has also had excavations, including that of a Roman road, but surveys have revealed a settlement site. The finds from the PAS seem largely to fall within this same site and so add more information to that already known.

Group 6

Group 6 is dominated by mainly rural and villa sites. The parish of Radford Semele (rad) is in this group, and contains the most coins of any parish with 851. Although there is no record on the HER, it is noted on the coin records themselves that the majority of the coins come from the Leamington (Pounce Hill) villa site. The other parishes in this group, Bredon (bre) and Offenham (off), both have records on the HER relating to possible settlements and features in the area. Although there has been an excavation in the Bredon area, the majority of the coins from the PAS are from a different part of the parish; this may indicate a new site but the sample size is too small to be definitive. The parish of Offenham has also been noted previously as a settlement site (Cox 1967, Site 16) but the 40 coins from the PAS are not from the same area. This again may indicate a new site, but more work needs to be completed in the area.

Group 15

Group 15 is an interesting cluster because it contains three known temple sites, and Garrard (2010) has argued that Colchester House may be a church. It could be reasoned, therefore, that the parishes of Bickmarsh and North and Middle Littleton may also contain sites that could be attributed as temple or religious sites due to their coin profile. All the finds from Bickmarsh come from the Staple Hill area, which has been noted on the HER as the site of a possible settlement (Worcestershire HER 2012b). It has also been listed in Romano-British Occupation sites (Cox 1967, Site 11). It consists of several small rectangular enclosures and a linear ditch and other Romano-British finds have been noted from the area. Staple Hill, therefore, would need more investigation to discover whether it is a settlement, or, as the coin profile suggests, a temple site. There is no listed monument

for the area from which the coins from North and Middle Littleton originate, so this may well be an as yet undiscovered temple site but again, more work needs to be completed in order to give a more definite answer.

The Cluster Analysis therefore, has produced interesting results, some of which have been confirmed as known sites on the relevant HERs. However, there are indications of some new sites. These would need more work to confirm or disprove the tentative conclusions from the coin profiles, whether by excavation or by further desk-based assessments. These results will now be compared to those from the Correspondence Analysis in order to examine if similar conclusions can be drawn using a different statistical method.

Correspondence analysis

The CA was undertaken twice for this study, once using only the parish profiles and then repeated with the parishes added to the 136 sites used previously by Lockyear (2000) to allow comparison with the rest of the country.

Analysis of parish profiles

The CA of the parishes was also undertaken twice, once using the straight data and repeated using the data with a square root transformation. As the latter did not add to the analysis of the data, it was decided that the results from the first analysis would be used (Lockyear 2012, 6). The total inertia for the data is 0.86 and the map of the first two axes represents 59.8% of the variation in the data. However, 42% is shown by the first axis and only 9% on the second. [Figure 9.4](#) shows the map of Reece Periods and [Figure 9.5](#) shows the map of parishes.

The decomposition of inertia shows that in [Figure 9.4](#), the variation in Periods XI, XII and XXI are represented very badly. So their positions on the map, therefore, should largely be ignored. The first axis represents the early Periods, I–VII, against the later Periods. The decomposition of inertia also shows that this pattern is mainly created by the contributions of Periods I, IV and VI with most of the other Periods having low scores. The second axis tends to place the latest Periods against some of the middle Periods. The pattern shown

on the map is common with coinage data and shows the time sequence that would be expected.

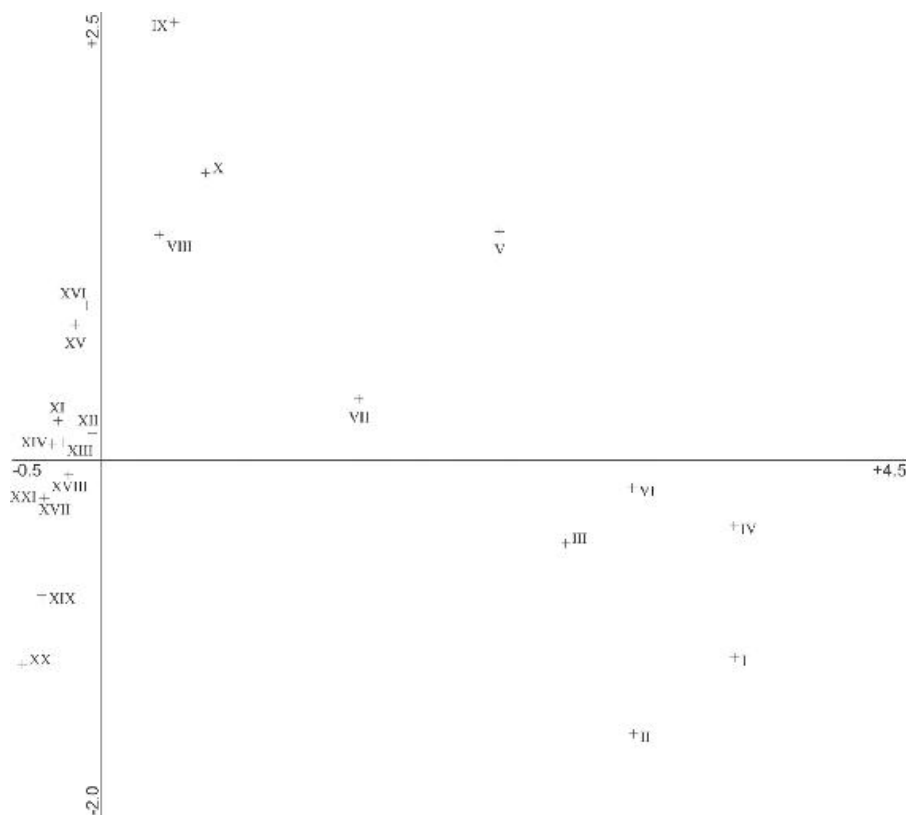


Figure 9.4 Map from CA of parish data. Points are Reece Periods (from Lockyear 2012, 7)

With regard to the map of parishes, the decompositions of inertia show that most sites are well represented with the exceptions of Aston Cantlow (ast), Kinton (kin), Temple Grafton (grf), Welford-on-Avon (wel) and Cleeve Prior (cle). The first axis identifies parishes with early coinage such as Wall (wal), whilst the second axis contrasts sites with above average early to mid-fourth-century coinage, such as Harbury (har), with those with late coinage such as Bickmarsh (bic) and North and Middle Littleton (lit).

The first axis highlights the parishes of Wall (wal), Swindon (swi) and Great Witley (wit). These parishes were all placed in groups on their own in the cluster analysis, which indicates their peculiarity. Wall and Swindon both have exceptionally high quantities of early

coinage, whilst Great Witley also has high quantities of early coinage, specifically from Period X. The parish of Wall contains the Roman site of *Letocetum* (Staffordshire HER 2012a); it is probable that this is the reason why so many coins are found there. The site at Wall developed from a military presence potentially at the border of two Iron Age tribes (Staffordshire HER 2012a; Welfare and Swan 1994, 175) and this would account for the high proportion of early coinage.

At Swindon, there is also evidence of a military presence in the shape of a temporary camp (Staffordshire HER 2012b; Welfare and Swan 1994, 174–5). This is in a military landscape – the complex of camps and forts at Greensforge lies only 2 km to the SSE – and so again the high quantities of early coinage in this parish are not surprising. Great Witley, however, does not have any records on the HER. From the high quantities of early coinage this may indicate a military site in the area.

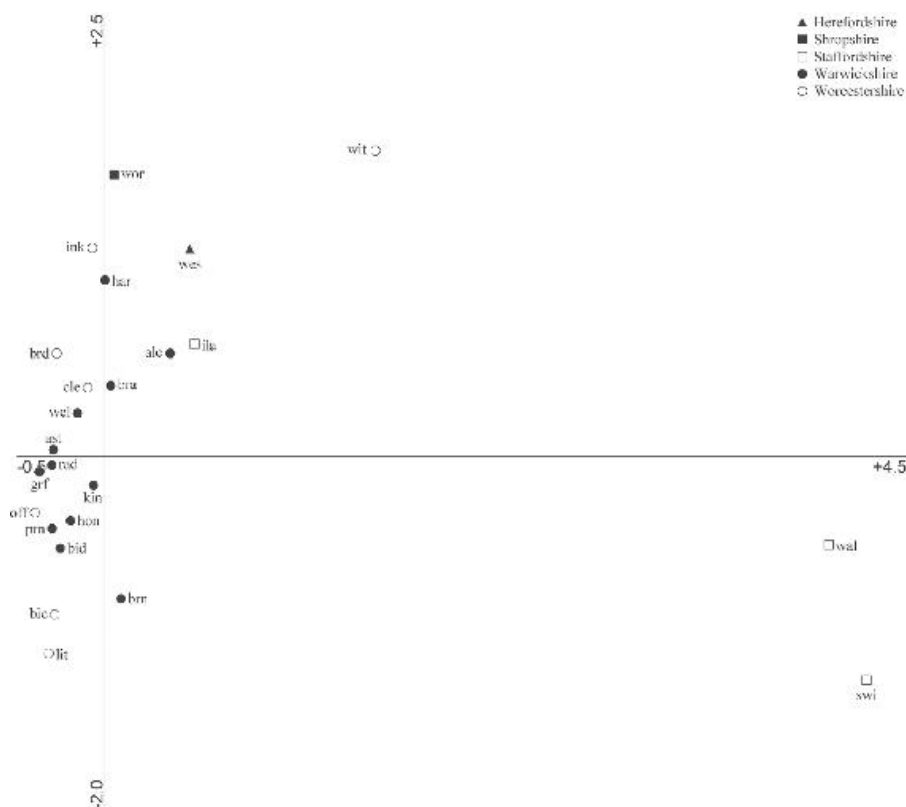


Figure 9.5 Map of CA parish data. Points are parishes (from Lockyear 2012, 8)

Figure 9.6 shows a map of the parish sites with the symbols representing the group they were placed into during the cluster analysis. This allows a comparison of the results of the two statistical techniques.

Some of the results are not surprising, such as the position of the parishes from Group 15 which are placed at the negative end of the second axis. This is due to their high quantities of late coinage. The parishes of Inkberrow (ink) and Harbury (har) are also in a group together and they are plotted close together since they have the two highest percentages of Period XVI coinage; the remaining groups are fairly intermingled on the map. This can be explained by the fact that CA does not take into account the ordinal nature of the Periods whereas the use of Dmax in the cluster analysis does (Lockyear 2012, 9). This comparison therefore is generally inconclusive. However, better comparisons with the cluster data can be made when the parish data is added to that from the 136 sites.

The full dataset

In order to be comparable with previous analyses, the data was subjected to a square root transformation. The total inertia for this dataset is 0.312 with the first axis 'explaining' 34.3% of the variation in the data, and the second axis 'explaining' 18.6%. The decompositions of inertia indicate that all the Periods, with the exception of Period XIV, have good quality for the map of axis, as do all the parishes with the exception of Brandon and Bretford (brn). This parish has only 23 coins and since 20 of these come from Period 20, this is not surprising. The map of Periods (Figure 9.7) shows a good horseshoe curve with the exception of Period I, which is out of sequence. This is normal, however, due to the *denarii* of Mark Antony remaining in circulation for longer than other Republican issues (Lockyear 2012, 11). The maps of sites and parishes (Figures 9.8 and 9.9) appear confused due to the number of points placed on them. As shown in previous analyses, there is patterning in the data (Lockyear 2000) and it is possible to apply this to the parishes from the West Midlands.

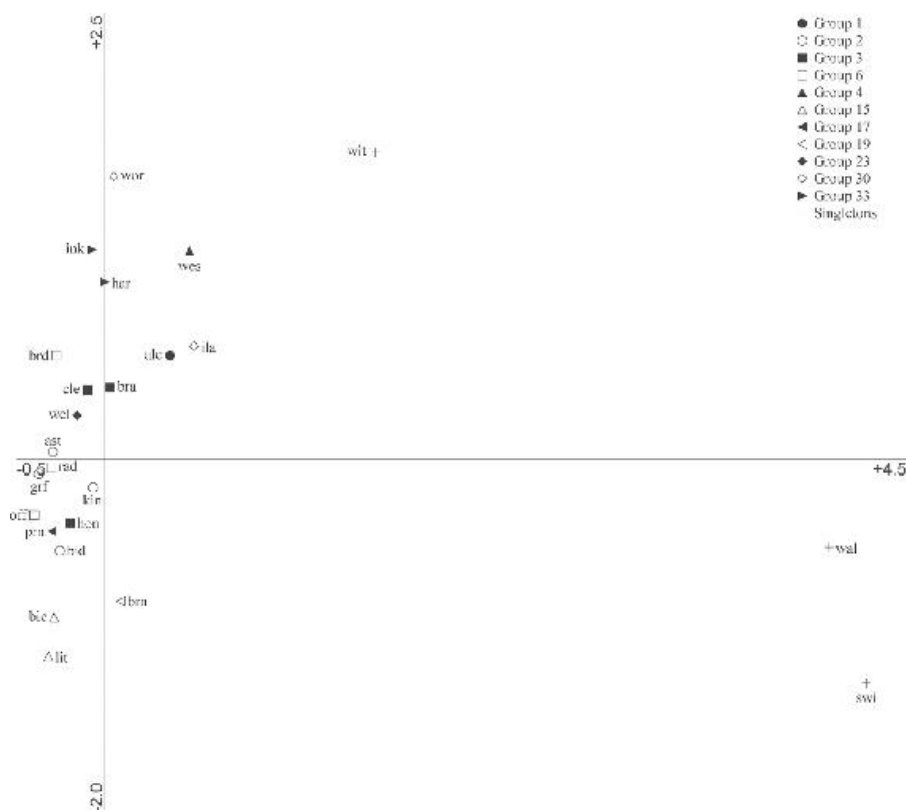
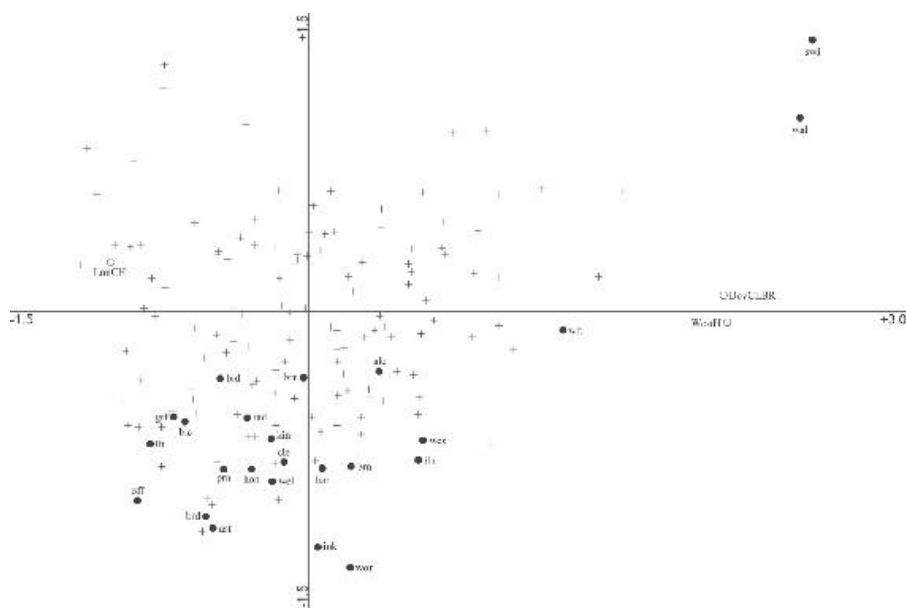


Figure 9.6 Map of CA parish data by cluster group. Points are parishes (from Lockyear 2012, 10)

Figure 9.8 shows that, similar to the results from the first CA, the parishes of Wall and Swindon are plotted in extreme positions on the map. Lockyear (2012, 12) notes that these two profiles are extremely unusual and concludes that either they are sites with intense early activity that were abandoned early, or were dispersed hoards. The PAS data does not indicate that there are dispersed hoards in either parish. As discussed above, both sites did have early military activity, with Swindon having a temporary camp. This indicates that Lockyear's first hypothesis seems most likely. The extremes of the data, however, are still unusual and represent an interesting aspect of the archaeology in the West Midlands.

The parish of Great Witley, which was also highlighted as being an unusual parish in the first CA, is not in an extreme location in Figures 9.8 and 9.9. It is, though, placed alongside other military sites and so this adds credence to the idea that it could be an unidentified military



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Joined-up thinking: reconstructing the Roman West Midlands from the ceramic evidence

C. Jane Evans

It should never be forgotten that the specialist reports banished to the back of so many excavation reports (or, even worse, to the archive) are not so many optional extras: they are the very stuff of past lives and habits and should be treasured and used as such. (Cool and Baxter 1999, 94; [Figure 10.1](#)).

Author's note

This paper, originally written in 2002 and updated in 2014, documents my view of regional pottery studies at that time. It is informative to see what has changed, and what has not. Where sites have now been published, or other significant developments have taken place, this is noted in the text [*in brackets and italics*]; otherwise the text remains substantially unchanged. It has not been possible to review all the more recent literature for the region and I am aware of a bias towards areas where I have worked and papers I have written! I apologise to other pottery specialists working in the region if their more recent work is not referenced. I am aware there will be many omissions in this final version, but hope it will at least provide a useful starting point for future discussions.

The years since 2002 have seen many changes, across the archaeological profession generally, and within the West Midlands region specifically. At the time of writing I was based at Birmingham

Archaeology, the field unit of The University of Birmingham. This no longer exists, and the university has stepped back from its engagement with the Roman archaeology of the region. My first thought on revisiting this paper was ‘I wouldn’t write it like that now,’ but there is neither funding nor time for a complete revision. A revised research agenda and strategy for Roman pottery of the region is long over-due. The last was published in 1997 and the need to update existing documents was highlighted a few years ago in the Study Group for Roman Pottery (SGRP) Research Strategy and Updated Agenda (Perrin 2011, 23). This would need to draw on the expertise of all those working in the region, and is a much bigger task than time and space allows for here. Such a review would also need to take account of significant, recent initiatives. The SGRP Research Strategy (Perrin 2011) provides the most recent statement on national priorities for the study of Roman pottery.

The results of The Roman Rural Settlement Project, undertaken by the University of Reading and Cotswold Archaeology, are now published (Smith *et al.* 2016). This will greatly inform our understanding of the region and feed into any future research agendas. Pottery data, however, have not played as significant a role in this study as they might, owing to its complexity and issues of inconsistency in the way it is recorded. The SGRP, Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG) and Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) are currently collaborating on an Historic England-funded project to produce joint standards guidance, which will hopefully lead to more consistency. The three groups have already collaborated on a joint paper summarising the potential and problems that exist in pottery studies, perhaps useful background reading for studies in this region (Evans *et al.* 2016). The Heritage England-funded ‘Archaeological Reference Resources Project,’ currently being undertaken by Rachel Edwards and Hal Dalwood (<http://www.archaeologicalreferenceresources.uk/>) will also contribute to studies in the region; collating information about fabric and form type series, and other significant collections and publications (Figure 10.2). My original paper refers to ‘SMRs’ and contains the occasional comment on the validity of the data contained. It has not been possible to assess current HER data as part of this review, but it is hoped that over the many intervening years, these data will have been

enhanced.



Figure 10.1 'Black samian' jar depicting Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome, carrying his elderly father Anchises from the destruction of Troy (found at Redhill in Shropshire; Bird 2015). This is an excellent example of the potential for seemingly routine commercial excavations in advance of development to turn up finds of national significance (Photograph: Laura Templeton, courtesy of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service)

Introduction

The other papers in this volume demonstrate the wide variety of

research questions relevant to Romano-British studies in this region. Ceramics, and other material finds, can be used to address many of these, so long as finds are appropriately recorded and published. Large quantities of pottery were produced, used and deposited during the Roman period, so pottery provides a significant source of evidence for all sites. There are, however, regional variations; there is a wealth of material culture in the south-east that is not found in Wales and northern Britain. The modern West Midlands region covers the area of transition, so sites to the south of Worcestershire and along the Avon Valley, for example, can be compared and contrasted with sites to the north of the region. The quantities of pottery recovered, even on sites to the north of our region, can present a challenge. Most fieldwork is undertaken in the context of competitive tendering and there can often be financial pressure to reduce the amount of pottery studied. Since writing the paper in 2002 there has also been increasing pressure to discard bulk finds such as pottery, as museum stores become increasingly short of space.



Figure 10.2 Examples from the Worcestershire Archaeology Fabric Type Series (Photograph: Laura Griffin, courtesy of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service)

A review of publications provides ample evidence that data from this region can make an important contribution to national studies. To maintain and enhance this, however, we need to focus our research and, crucially, to agree on appropriate, consistent methodologies. This will best be achieved by the sort of joined-up thinking these Research Frameworks should provide, and by a more collaborative approach

between all of us involved in the archaeology of this region.

The following paper is divided into four sections with the following aims:

- 1) To summarise the current research agenda for Romano-British ceramics in the region;
- 2) To highlight the particular potential of this region, illustrating the contribution made to broader research by regional studies;
- 3) To make some initial suggestions for future study and to consider the strategies needed to apply the Research Agenda we define, based on methodological, organisational and curatorial considerations;
- 4) To highlight the relevance of Romano-British archaeology to modern-day society in the West Midlands Region.

The current research agenda

The archaeological profession has given much thought to research agendas for this period. Most relevant to this paper is the review produced in 1991 by English Heritage (Fulford and Huddleston 1991) and the more recent Research Frameworks for the Study of Roman Pottery (Willis 1997; [*published in JRPS as Willis (ed.) 2004*]). The latter was produced by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (SGRP), drawing on the expertise of all Study Group members, and can be found on the SGRP website www.romanpotterystudy.org. This provides the latest definitive statement by the profession and thus the background to this paper. A selection of quotes from it is included below. The frameworks provide an,

interlocking matrix of thematic statements and regional frameworks which should be conceived of both as stand-alone statements and as integral components of the National Framework covering the United Kingdom. It is these companion Regional Documents which contain the essential detailed information upon which the National Frameworks draws; the latter should not be regarded as a substitute or proxy for them. (Willis 1997)

This is worth noting in the context of the West Midlands Research Frameworks. We are not considering how our regional research fits in with pre-determined national agendas. Rather, we are considering how our regional research is already informing, and contributing to,

the existing national agenda.

The SGRP document comprises a National Research Framework Document and four regional research framework documents, including one covering Western Britain. The national document summarises the major research objectives on the basis of major site types and themes.

- Major site types: urban sites, military sites, kiln studies, rural sites, landscape studies, cemeteries, backlog sites.
- Themes: chronology, trade/supply and distribution, Roman and native interaction, pottery and the organisation of the Roman army, functional trends, site status, spatial patterning and integrated finds studies, social and cultural identity, ritual sites and ritual practice, Roman pottery production and other Roman industries, the end of the Romano-British economy.

Our West Midlands region is included in the chapter on Western Britain, which draws on suggestions from a number of regional specialists (Booth and Willis 1997). This covers a much wider area than the region defined for this study, extending from Cheshire in the north to Cornwall in the south, and from Oxfordshire in the east to Pembrokeshire in the west. However, a number of sites in our research area are specifically mentioned. Publication of the 1960–84 excavations at Mancetter-Hartshill is ‘considered a national priority’. [*This remains unpublished, although knowledge and understanding of pottery production is identified as fundamental to the study of Roman pottery in the SGRP Research Strategy (Perrin 2011, 41, Research Strategy Objective 2)*]. Production sites for Severn Valley ware are noted as ‘of above average importance’. The significance of the Malvern pottery industry is also highlighted, described as ‘a rare example of a tradition with a direct continuity of fabric, form and technology from the Iron Age into the Roman period’, with a ‘significant regional distribution’. Various unpublished excavations from this region were identified as sites of major regional importance: Beckford, Worcestershire; Coleshill, Tiddington, Lapworth and 1–5 Bleachfield Street, Alcester, all in Warwickshire; and Wroxeter, Shropshire. [*The Wroxeter excavations are now published (Barker et al. 1997; Ellis 2000; Webster 2002), as is Coleshill (Magilton 2006). Further work has been undertaken on Beckford post-excavation but the report has still not been published, and*

the kilns at Tiddington, Lapworth and Alcester remain unpublished].

Staffordshire seems poorly represented in the SGRP review, and in the earlier English Heritage review of Romano-British pottery studies (Fulford and Huddleston 1991). Other papers in this volume illustrate the significance of Romano-British sites in this county, for example the excavations of the fort and *vicus* at Rocester. A great deal of excavation has been undertaken at Wall, much being achieved by local amateur groups. The ceramics, however, remain poorly understood, with little, if any, quantified data. This material is in urgent need of detailed analysis and publication, perhaps as part of a wider reassessment of the site. Production of an overview of the pottery from the county, based on quantified data, should be a priority (Ruth Leary, pers. comm.), and other assemblages, such as the material from the Manifold Valley caves, could be targeted for more research (op. cit.). [*The excavations along the M6 Toll have added a number of significant sites in this area, including a kiln* (Powell et al. 2008)].

The Roman archaeology of Herefordshire also seems under-represented in these ceramic reviews, although the significance of Roman archaeology in this county is highlighted in this volume. Once again, the lack of quantified data for older excavations is a problem. An extensive corpus of the pottery from Kenchester is available on fiche (Tomber 1985, fiche frames 1–72), for example, but full quantification was made impossible by the on-site discard policy (Tomber 1985, 100). [*Recent excavations at Yazor Brook, near Kenchester, have provided more quantified data, and allowed patterns of supply to be re-assessed* (Griffin 2011b).] Analysis of the backlog pottery from *Ariconium* (Willis 2012) has provided a substantial body of quantified data for the south of the county. The overall database for the county is also growing, thanks to a number of developer-funded excavations, and other projects [e.g. Evans 2003; Griffin 2011a], including Cardiff University's fieldwork at Lyonshall (Richardson 2003). A better understanding of pottery production in the county would make a valuable contribution to wider research. Kilns are known or suspected in the county, at Stoke Prior (Haliwell 1991; SMR 33843), Marley Hall near Ledbury (SMR 6800 4000), and Cradley (SMR 5462), for example. These need to be researched more fully, and other production sites located. [*A well-preserved kiln was discovered in*

2014 at Credenhill near Kenchester which, if fully published, could make a significant contribution to this area of research (Atkinson et al. 2015). Also, since writing this paper, a mortarium bibliography for Roman Britain has been published (Hartley and Tomber 2007), including a section on the West Midlands region.]

The potential of Romano-British ceramic studies in this region

Figure 10.3 shows a plot of the ceramic data held on SMRs across the region in 2002. This provides an initial starting point for regional studies, but there are limitations to the data and its presentation. Some of these could be dealt with by fine tuning, for example known sites that have not appeared on the plots. Other limitations are more fundamental, and would require changes to the data included in SMRs or the establishment of a separate, more detailed regional database. It is not possible, for example, to access information on the quantities or fabrics represented. There does seem to be a north/south divide in the number of find spots recorded. Possible factors influencing this are suggested later in the text.

[HER data has been enhanced since this paper was written, and many more site assemblages will have been recorded, but there will still be issues accessing more detailed information, such as fabric quantities.]

This region has seen a number of significant excavations, mostly urban. A key urban site is the *civitas* capital at Wroxeter which, remaining undeveloped, provides a major national resource for research and teaching (Evans 2004a). A feasibility study carried out by the DoE in the early 1970s noted that,

Wroxeter ... has a tremendous potential for extended archaeological research and training and as a monument to be displayed and interpreted to the public. With proper expansion and development it will rank second in the country to Hadrian's Wall as a major Roman monument accessible to the public. (P. White 1976)

This wider potential was demonstrated by the success of the training excavations run by Graham Webster and Philip Barker, through the University of Birmingham. The major excavations there are now all published (Barker et al. 1997; Ellis 2000; Webster 2002). They

produced a substantial assemblage of artefacts dating from the Conquest through to the end of the Roman period. However, significant bodies of artefacts remain unpublished, as highlighted by Hilary Cool in her paper, and the assemblages from older excavations are not recorded to modern standards. [*The finds are now published online (Cool 2014; Cool et al. 2014), but it remains true that pottery from older excavations is not recorded to modern standards. For example, discard policies on the Webster baths/macellum site were still in operation as late as 1976 – Roger White, pers. comm.*] The Wroxeter Hinterland project [Gaffney and White 2007; White et al. 2013] illustrates the value of studying urban sites within their rural context and has allowed post-PPG 16 evaluations and excavations to be viewed as part of a broader research programme. Other excavations across the region have produced assemblages from a wide range of chronological and functional contexts, including military, civilian, domestic, industrial, agricultural and ritual deposits. Some have already been mentioned above and there are too many to list in full. It is, however, worth mentioning military sites such as Metchley and Greensforge, industrial sites such as Droitwich, *Ariconium* and the pottery production sites at Perry Barr and Sherifoot Lane, and the Roman towns of Worcester and Kenchester. It is encouraging that post-PPG 16 evaluations and excavations are adding to the database of material from rural sites in the region (Booth and Willis 1997, 55, 7.4), although the results published in grey literature are not widely accessible [*a situation that has changed thanks to the Roman Rural Settlement Project*].

Romano-British pottery studies in this region have benefited from a number of exemplary site publications, providing the quantified data essential to any further research. A number of important synthetic studies have also been made. Some of these have been county based. Warwickshire, for example, has been well covered by Paul Booth (Booth 1986; Booth 1996), whose reassessment of the Roman evidence is presented in this volume. Others focused on specific industries. Earlier research on these placed the region at the forefront of provenance studies in the 1960s and '70s, making a significant contribution to the study of pottery production and trade. Importantly, this is also a strength for Iron Age and medieval studies in this region, providing potential for broader multi-period studies. David Peacock, then of the University of Birmingham, published

petrological studies of both the prehistoric and Roman pottery produced in the Malvern area (Peacock 1967; Peacock 1968), and in the 1970s Alan Vince contributed a study of the medieval Malvernian wares (Vince 1977). At the same time, post-graduate research contributed to the definition and study of Severn Valley ware (Webster 1971; Webster 1976; Tomber 1980). Local archaeology groups also made an important contribution to the study of this ware. In Worcestershire, for example, fieldwork was undertaken on the Malvern kilns by both the Malvern Research Group and the Kidderminster Archaeological and Historical Society. Since this period no major research projects have been undertaken on Romano-British ceramics from this region, which is something which needs to be addressed. However, ceramic assemblages from this region still contribute to wider synthetic studies, for example Allen and Fulford's study of BB1 distributions (Allen and Fulford 1996). *[Since writing this paper Alan Vince and David Peacock have both died. In the near-half century since Peacock's seminal work, still regularly referred to in site reports, no-one has really progressed this study, despite the large number of assemblages that have subsequently been excavated and the potential that now exists for complex spatial studies using GIS. This is discussed further below. We have to ask where will the next generation of provenance studies specialists come from?]*

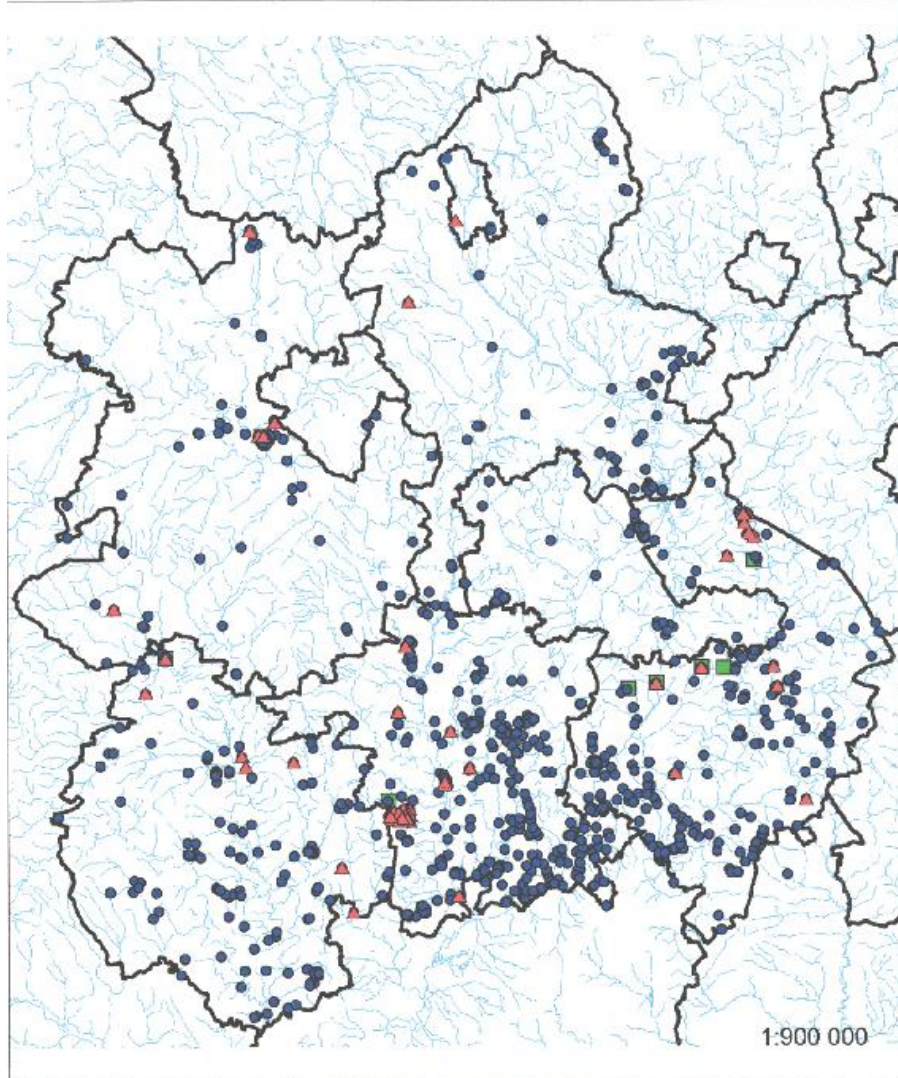


Figure 10.3 A plot of Roman ceramics and kilns as in 2002 (unrevised). Blue dots = finds spots; green square = tile kilns; red triangles = pottery kilns. County boundaries shown as in 2002

Analyses of ceramic provenance and trade have traditionally been used in studies relating to the economic geography of the region. Ian Hodder, for example, included Malvernian wares in his study of marketing models for Romano-British coarse pottery (Hodder 1974, 346, fig. 5). Ceramic studies also contribute to a range of other research themes, more relevant to cultural geography (Woolf 1998). Ceramic data from this region have already featured in a number of influential studies, and the potential is there for this to continue. Paul

Booth, for example, demonstrated the value of ceramics as indicators of site status in his inter-site comparison between pottery assemblages from Warwickshire (Booth 1991). More recently, Jeremy Evans drew on data from the West Midlands region to demonstrate the value of material culture for identifying site types (Evans 2001).

A key research theme is cultural identity, encompassing Romanisation; defined in the brief for the seminar on which this volume is based as,

the impact of the imposition of Roman material culture and identity on the region in respect of patterns of resistance and acceptance over long and short time spans and how this may be measured archaeologically.

One approach to this is to study the ceramic evidence for, and significance of, pre-Roman tribal boundaries continuing into the Roman period as *civitas* boundaries. Niall Sharples noted the advantages of using our modern political region as the basis for Iron Age studies during his résumé of the Iron Age seminar. This area of research can be enhanced by incorporating the Roman evidence. The existing model of the *civitates* (e.g. Millett 1990, figs 16 and 17) suggests that our modern Region incorporates a number of Roman administrative or cultural areas, in addition to the distinct geographic zones. Modern Staffordshire, for example, alone encompasses three postulated *civitas* boundaries. The SGRP Research Framework for Western Britain notes (Booth and Willis 1997, 57, 12.1),

The possibility that aspects of social/cultural identity may be discernible in ceramic patterning is worthy of consideration. Possible examples of artefactual distributions within the region include the apparently well-defined eastern limit of the distribution of Severn Valley ware. This distribution (as well as those of other types) could be studied in more detail, compared with the distribution of other artefact types such as Iron Age coins, brooches and quern stones, and correlated with 'known' tribal boundaries in order to assess its significance.

Plotting the proportion of Severn Valley ware recovered from sites across a broad area (Allen and Fulford 1996, 262, fig. 14a, b) or even looking at relative proportions of oxidised and reduced wares, reveals a broad ceramic zone (Jerry Evans 1994, 148–9). This cultural zone is evident from distributions of other finds types (Hilary Cool, pers.

comm.). The zone appears to extend roughly from Wroxeter in the north, down to Gloucester and parts of Somerset in the south (Evans 2001, 158–9). In Warwickshire there is a sharp fall-off in Severn Valley wares to the east of Alcester, at sites such as Tiddington and Wasperton (Jerry Evans 1994, 149). Assemblages from sites to the east of this show more cultural affinities with assemblages from the East Midlands. Pottery production sites such as Perry Barr, Birmingham and Sherifoot Lane, Sutton Coldfield are very much on the eastern fringe of the Severn Valley production zone. [*Recent analysis of the Sherifoot Lane kiln assemblage (Evans et al. 2014) has shown that while Severn Valley ware-type tankards were amongst the forms produced, the other forms and the kiln structure showed different cultural affinities, suggestive of Verulamium potters moving into the region.*] The northern edge seems to run across Staffordshire. Greensforge, to the south of the county, for example, is dominated by Severn Valley ware (Evans 1999, 24, fig. 6). In contrast, assemblages from Rocester, further north, are dominated by reduced wares (Leary 1996, figs 27 and 28), and show more cultural affinities with sites to the east and north. This pattern is reflected by other types of archaeological evidence, for example the distribution of villas (Ruth Leary, pers. comm.). The western edge is perhaps less well-defined, though analysis of quantified data from western Herefordshire and Shropshire should elucidate this. These distributions need to be explored further, with more quantified data from sites of different periods and types. They also need to be studied in relation to Iron Age, and perhaps post-Roman, distributions to assess evidence for continuity. During the Iron Age our West Midlands region divides into a southern zone, with a strong ceramic tradition, and a northern zone with no obvious ceramic tradition (Millett 1990, fig. 2). The distribution plot of Roman pottery across the region ([Figure 10.3](#)) might reflect a similar north/south divide in this period. This needs to be properly quantified, and any biases in fieldwork taken into account. Any attempt to study this would also need to draw on more data from rural sites, rather than the more typically Romanised urban centres. [*This north/south divide is very apparent in the pottery density plot produced by The Roman Rural Settlement project ([Figure 10.4](#)), which also clearly illustrates the contrast between the quantities of pottery recovered in the West Midlands region, and regions to the south and east. This figure appears in an altered form as*

Smith et al. 2016, fig. 12.10.]

Characterising and comparing the material culture of individual sites can provide useful evidence for Romanisation (Figure 10.5). Jerry Evans' study (2001), for example, used quantified data from the region in a functional analysis of ceramic assemblages. He demonstrates variations between rural and urban sites, reflecting differing levels of Romanisation. Rural sites, for example, were more jar-dominated, and urban sites had a higher proportion of table wares (J. Evans 2001, fig. 7). There were also clear variations in the levels of fine wares, such as samian and other colour coats (J. Evans 2001, fig. 10), and the proportion of amphorae on military, urban, and basic rural sites (J. Evans 2001, fig. 11). The Wroxeter Hinterland Project [Gaffney et al. 2007; White et al. 2013] is a good example of a broader landscape study that allowed such comparisons to be made, and demonstrates the limited cultural impact that even a major Roman centre such as Wroxeter could have. The apparent paucity of villas in our region provides an interesting area for study. Do assemblages from rural sites provide any evidence for high-status sites that are not defined by typical villa structures? How do rural assemblages from our region compare, for example, with those from Gloucestershire, where villas are more common? What could this be telling us about patterns of Romanisation? [*Assemblages from the mansio sites in the West Midlands would justify further attention. Analysis has recently been completed on pottery from the road-side settlement at Redhill (Uxacona) in Shropshire (Evans 2015), and the finds from David Browne's 1972–73 excavations there have been audited for English Heritage (Hurst et al. 2015). These assemblages fill a gap in our knowledge between the well-studied assemblages from Wroxeter, to the west of Redhill, and the less well-studied assemblages from the sites at Wall and Mancetter, further east along Watling Street.*]

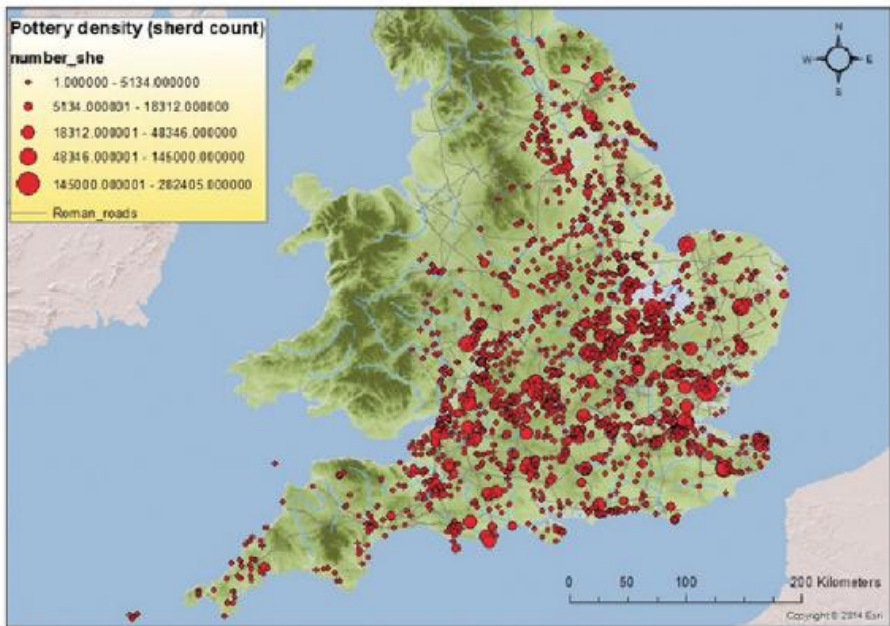


Figure 10.4 Density of pottery by sherd count from excavated Roman rural settlement within six English regions (Image courtesy of Roman Rural Settlement Project, University of Reading)

Initial suggestions for future study and strategies required

The value of this region for studying patterns of production and trade is noted above, and was also emphasised in the Iron Age seminar. While the subject of this paper is ceramics, the production of other commodities (salt, iron, copper, lead, agricultural produce etc.) would have been inter-related and would have been influenced by the same geographical and cultural factors (raw materials, road and river transport, *civitas* boundaries). Pottery traders may have been exploiting well-established, or perhaps even official, trade routes in some of these other commodities. Many of the points raised here could, therefore, be applied to studies of other equally important materials.



Figure 10.5 A rich assemblage under recovery from a feature at the Bromwich Lane Tennis Club site, St John's Worcester. The abundance of pottery is typical of early Roman period sites across the region, but especially so in the south (Photograph: Adam Stamford, courtesy of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service)

Although the West Midlands has some significant Roman pottery

industries, for example at Mancetter-Hartshill, Wroxeter and Malvern, overall relatively few kilns have been located in comparison with other regions (Tyers 1996, fig. 15). Trends have been noted elsewhere in the country that could be tested in this region if more kilns could be located, for example the clustering of kilns near (presumed) *civitas* boundaries and chronological trends in the location of kilns (Millett 1990, fig 68). Detailed studies of kiln sites can also provide evidence for the cultural origins of potters and the relationship of pottery production to other industrial or agricultural activities (Swan 1984) [*This has been exemplified by subsequent analysis of the Sherifoot Lane kiln and its products, as noted above (Evans et al. 2014)*]. Proactive fieldwork, including geophysical survey, is needed to locate kiln sites, which only occasionally turn up on development sites. This could perhaps be achieved by academics and curators drawing on the skills and enthusiasm of amateur groups. Any unpublished kiln excavations need to be published as a priority. The national significance of the Mancetter-Hartshill excavations, in particular, must be stressed [*Hartley and Tomber 2007, 73*]. The Wroxeter *mortaria* industry remains poorly understood and under-published, despite having a considerable market (Kay Hartley, pers. comm.). *Mortaria* from these production sites have a particular value for studying the origins of potters, to the extent that the movements of individual potters can sometimes be detected. The existing SMR data for kilns also needs to be re-assessed. Some of the kilns plotted are only very tentatively identified, or are not, in fact, Roman kilns. Where kilns are identified on development sites it is important that associated features (such as wells, puddling pits, workshop floors etc.) are recorded, as at Newlands Hopfields in Worcestershire (Evans *et al.* 2000; [Figure 10.6](#)). Briefs also need to specify a requirement for some independent scientific dating of the kiln, and excavations need to be adequately funded. As the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies noted (1985, Section 4.5.1.1),

Kiln sites provide information which is out of all proportion to the resources required to dig them but they do require above average allocation of resources for post excavation and publication, which is justifiable. (Willis 1997)

Distributions of the main wares need to be reassessed, rather than

relying on studies made sometimes as long as 30 years ago. The development of new techniques such as GIS will allow more complex studies to be made, relating the ceramic data to a range of geographical factors. The development of provenance studies in the region will also require the application of new scientific methods for characterising sources. For example, a collaborative project between The University of Birmingham and Keele University explored the use of XRF to geochemically ‘fingerprint’ Severn Valley ware sources, with the goal of provenancing individual artefacts. Already proven to be successful in the Wroxeter Hinterland region (Cassidy *et al.* 1999), this could be applied to other problematic fabrics, such as Cheshire Plain wares. [*This study showed promising results (Evans 2004b), but unfortunately was never fully developed.*]

A synthetic study needs to be made of pottery traditions across the region, based on the increasing body of quantified data. It is clear that some industries have their origins in native Iron Age traditions (e.g. Malvernian wares and to some extent Severn Valley ware) while others have clearly continental origins (e.g. military production at Wroxeter). Identifying patterns in this could advance research into the impact of the army or urbanisation, or the continuity of native life. A significant part of the region is dominated by oxidised wares, rather than the reduced wares more typical of local production elsewhere in Britain. This could provide evidence for regional variations in ceramic technology or use, and thus perhaps cultural preferences. The tankard is the characteristic form in many assemblages across the region (Figure 10.7). This could be a culturally significant form. While not commonly used outside the zone associated with Severn Valley ware, tankards and other Severn Valley forms were transported to the northern frontier. Together with a range of other ceramics found across the region, in particular the products of the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns, this is evidence for military supply to an archaeological area of international importance.

Most of these are pure research questions best addressed through synthetic studies, which could be encouraged by developing collaborative research programmes and new scientific and methodological techniques [Willis 2004, 6, 3.4]. Some research questions could be approached by harnessing the current public enthusiasm for archaeology and building on links with local

archaeological societies. The Research Frameworks, however, are particularly concerned with curatorial considerations and the strategies necessary for developer-related archaeology. In this author's view, the most important consideration here is the need for agreed standards of analysis and reporting to be specified in briefs. The SGRP Frameworks notes,

It is extremely important that pottery reporting and other projects include fully quantitative study as a matter of course ... Adequate provision must be made for such work in project funding grants, sufficient to support such work to publication, including the basic data ... Full publication of basic data is highly desirable since without it any report will be of limited use to other researchers. (Willis 1997)

To allow for inter-site comparison, the methods used must be standardised across the region and tied in with national guidelines, for example the guidelines on archiving Roman pottery produced by the SGRP (available on their website). There needs to be agreement on what methodologies are appropriate. Should all excavation, for example, have a requirement to record volumes of soil removed? This would allow for more valid comparison between quantities of pottery from different sites. Synthetic research would benefit greatly from the establishment of an online regional fabric series, tied in to the national series. This would promote collaboration between specialists involved in pottery research in the region, and would facilitate comparative studies. This could build on what has already been achieved by Worcestershire County Council's Archive and Archaeology Service (www.worcestershireceramics.org).

The value of publishing data needs to be emphasised in briefs. Data that needs to be disseminated, from evaluations and assessments for example, can be lost in grey literature. Financial constraints can force decisions about the publication, and even recording, of one set of data at the expense of another. The failure to publish assemblages adequately can be justified if they do not fit into the specific research aims of a publication, but pottery and other finds can have a significance well beyond that of a specific site. Other routes are available for publication of such data (the Archaeological Data Service, county journal round-ups, *West Midlands Archaeology* or, in the case of Roman pottery, the *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*).

These need to be explored and any associated costs identified. Illustrations are very important to pottery specialists, who regularly need to compare assemblages from different sites (the basis of any level of research). However, illustrations are also time-consuming to produce. The selection of pottery for publication can therefore be dictated more by financial pressure than the requirements of research. This is another issue that perhaps could be addressed in briefs.



Figure 10.6 a) Products of the Newland Hopfields kiln site, Malvern showing typical Severn Valley ware products; b) Wasters from the Newland Hopfields kiln site (Photographs: Graham Norrie)

The SGRP considers it ‘essential that pottery work is carried out or closely overseen by those qualified to do so’ (Willis 1997). This has obvious implications for developing university training and continuing professional development for finds specialists working in the region. *[In 2015 there remains a handful of specialists with significant experience working on Roman pottery in this region, but there is little evidence for new, young specialists developing this expertise, and at present, no formal structure within which these specialists can pass on their expertise to students of archaeology.]*



Figure 10.7 Severn Valley ware tankard – a diagnostic type from the region. Its form skeuomorphically echoes a leather tankard. The metal rim and handle of just such a leather tankard was found in Iron Age levels at Beeston Castle, Cheshire (Foster 1993) (Photograph: Laura Griffin, courtesy of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service)

The value of rural assemblages needs to be emphasised in briefs, and the potential for spatial planning should be considered:

The great majority of the people of Roman Britain lived on these sites and their consumption patterns (of which pottery provides important evidence) must have had a major bearing on the functioning of regional economies ... There is a strong a priori case therefore for increasing the examination of rural sites, especially lower-status settlements, both for ceramic and other aspects ... Project planning for such sites needs to take active account of the relatively low incidence of pottery and other objects and maximise recovery, for instance by above average proportions of feature fills such as enclosure ditches. (Willis 1997)

Ritual sites and ritual deposits also need more study, and their assemblages need to be characterised [Willis 2004, 16]. Where are the Roman dead in this region, and what part did material culture play in the rituals associated with their burial?

The relevance of Romano-British archaeology to modern-day society in the West Midlands region

Much of this paper has focused on research questions that interest us as professional archaeologists, concerned with the curation and understanding of the archaeology of the region. However, this Research Framework is also intended to inform museum curators and education officers who promote archaeology to the wider public. Judy Ling Wong of the Black Environment Network (BEN) has stated that,

History is a living entity that survives through relevant contemporary re-interpretation. A past that is petrified through being framed by out of date interpretive values will instigate its own destruction through being irrelevant to its audience. Such presentations elicit the reaction ‘What’s all this got to do with us?’ or ‘Where is the bit about us? Contemporary interpretation requires the recognition of every player in the scene. (Ling Wong 1999, 2)

BEN are asking the Heritage Sector to ‘Move away from the domination of a mythical and exclusive monoculture that is no longer relevant to the contemporary world’ and to ‘Uncover the currently invisible multi-cultural aspects of local and national history and heritage.’

This potential for Romano-British studies to contribute to such

debates has already been noted. For example, J. D. Hill notes in *Britons and Romans* (Hill 2000, 18),

At the heart of the exploration of human societies today are issues such as the construction of identities, the nature of material culture, how power and domination work at all levels of society... Roman Britain has one of the best databases in the world to explore these issues... The potential for data-rich but theoretically informed discussions of these issues is immense.

We need to demonstrate this potential in the way that we present the archaeology of the region to the public. The ceramic evidence for changing cultural identity, for example, is relevant to all members of this region's diverse, multi-cultural community. The artefacts stored in museums across the region could be used to illustrate this (Figure 10.8). Pottery is one of the most common finds and, to quote Greg Woolf (1998, 186), 'makes manifest a series of social categories and claims about status that are inaccessible through most other sources.'



Figure 10.8 A selection of objects from the Wroxeter Gutter find. The find comprised whetstones, mortaria from Mancetter-Hartshill and plain samian vessels, all unused. The assemblage was excavated in 1923 and published by Donald Atkinson in 1942, but has not been studied since. It offers an example of the potential of the existing archive collections that could inform present-day research strategies (Photograph: R. White)

Conclusions

In conclusion, this process has allowed us to review the region's research agenda for Romano-British ceramics, and to some extent Romano-British studies in general. As the ideas in all the papers are

integrated we should be able to define some priorities for future research and publication. However, the next stage in the process, the development of practical strategies for achieving our research aims, will be critical to the future of material culture studies in the region. This current process has established a forum for collaboration across our region. This joined-up approach between academics, curators, contractors and amateurs should allow us to benefit from the strengths of all sectors. Equally important to the future of material culture studies, therefore, is the need to pursue this actively, and not let it be undermined by the competitive environment of commercial and academic funding. [*This collaboration has not continued, though the Roman Rural Settlement Project's West Midlands Region seminar was a reminder of the value of such gatherings. The need for this collaborative approach is, arguably, even greater now with so many different units working in the region.*]

Acknowledgements

Following the LPRIA to Sub-Roman research seminar this paper was published on the Research Frameworks website and circulated to members of the Study Group of Roman Pottery in 2002. I am grateful to the following, whose many useful comments I have tried to incorporate: Nigel Cassidy, Hilary Cool, James Dinn, Jeremy Evans, Kay Hartley, Ruth Leary and Colin Wallace. Ultimately, however, the views and any errors are my own.

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Romano-British religious sites in the West Midlands region

Iain Ferris

Introduction

There are relatively few religious sites of the Romano-British period known in the West Midlands. The sites discussed here are to be found on the distribution maps of their respective counties and comprise temples and sanctuaries but not find spots of altars. The latter type of record will not be discussed in this paper given that these individual finds are without context.

Of the sites listed in the regional Historic Environment Records (HERs) as temples, evaluation at Craven Arms, Shropshire in 1991 suggested that this was not, in fact, a religious enclosure (Darlington 1991), while the HER record of the site excavated in 1891 at New Weir, Kenchester, Herefordshire does not necessarily point to this site having a religious function (see Ray, this volume). The identification of temples at the Britannia Square site, Worcester and Little Comberton, Worcestershire would appear presently to be circumstantial, while without excavation doubt must also remain about the identification of temples in Warwickshire at Alcock's Arbour and Lawford Heath.

This paper will therefore concentrate on discussing the urban temples in Wroxeter, Shropshire and the two excavated rural temple sites of Grimstock Hill, Coleshill, Warwickshire and Orton's Pasture, Rocester, Staffordshire, along with finds from Wall, Staffordshire. Temples and sanctuaries in Herefordshire, including those at Croft Ambrey, are discussed by Ray in this volume.

Urban temples: Wroxeter

At Wroxeter, to the south of the forum on *insula* VIII, a major classical temple building (see Lewis 1965; Rodwell 1980; Henig 1984 on temple types), perhaps built in the second century, has been excavated,

with a four column facade and a clay and cobble podium faced with large sandstone blocks. Fragments of sculpture, among them a life-sized horse's head along with two fragments from a horse's leg, and a relief depicting Venus looking into a mirror with an attendant beside her, suggest that the deity in the temple might have been either Venus or Epona, the Celtic horse goddess, or conceivably both together,

according to Philip Barker and Roger White (Barker and White 2000, 95). Henig dismisses the association with Epona, noting that the horse's head is more likely to come from a Jupiter Column although it cannot have been used with the known fragments of the Jupiter Column referred to below as that was 'far too slender' (Henig 2004, 53–4). To the west of the temple, and probably associated with it, lay a large, double-walled enclosure that may represent a religious precinct although other interpretations have been offered (White *et al.* 2013, 102–5). The excavations by Bushe-Fox at the *insula* VIII temple recovered large assemblages of finds, including pottery, numerous small finds, amongst which were personal items such as brooches and pins which were probably dedicated as *ex votos*, and over five hundred coins (Bushe-Fox 1913).

On current evidence, this temple and possibly others in the city went out of use in the fourth century. Romano-Celtic temples were possibly sited to the south of the baths in *insula* XII (White *et al.* 2013, 110–12), and to the north of the present-day farm complex in *insula* XXXVII (White *et al.* 2013, 141–3). In addition to formal temples, there is indisputable evidence for the presence of at least one free-standing Jupiter Column which may itself have stood outside a temple thought to lie beneath the existing Victorian farm buildings overlying *insula* I (Henig 2004, 42–3; White *et al.* 2013, 92–3). Anatomical *ex votos* in the form of eyes, made of gold, copper alloy, plaster and samian, mostly found redeposited in rubble on the baths basilica site, attest to a temple in the city specialising in the healing of eye complaints, probably as well as other illnesses and ailments (Barker *et*

al. 1997, 212–6).

Other pieces of religious sculpture found in the city include a capital decorated with grapes and a hare (Henig 2004, 54), both Bacchic-related motifs (on Bacchus in Roman Britain, see Hutchinson 1986), found near the Bell Brook, and a fragment of a doorframe whose decoration includes a youthful figure, possibly Mercury, a seated woman with a basket who is presumably Mercury's northern European consort, Rosmerta, a goat (Mercury's cult animal) and a nude male figure identified as a Genius Loci (Henig 2004, 43). Another figured piece, a rectangular block carved with a bearded male, part-draped and perhaps leaning on a spear or holding a sceptre, may be Hercules or Bacchus. A *cornucopia* is carved on the left side while the right possibly has a tree stump or torso (Henig 2004, 44). The back is dressed flat so again, this is an architectural piece rather than part of a free-standing column. Less easy to interpret are the fragments of stone carvings depicting four contiguous stone heads with 'Celtic' features (stylised hair, almond-shaped eyes and triangular noses) and another fragment also with a 'Celtic' head (White and Barker 2000, 97). These are not now thought to be fragments of capitals (Henig 2004, 51). It is possible that the carving of a winged phallus pulling a cart also came from the temple site but was not mentioned by Bushe-Fox in deference to the sensibilities of the time (Henig 2004, 55). One last piece of sculpture, found beneath the *macellum*, is a half-size carving of Venus or a water nymph pouring water from a jar. The horizontal positioning of the jar, and the carved channel for a pipe, demonstrates that this must have been a fountain (Henig 2004, 44–5). Since it was found beneath the *macellum*, and was worn in places, having been reused, it must belong within the fortress buildings rather than the town.

The campaign of intensive and extensive geophysical survey at Wroxeter identified a building in *insula* X that was initially interpreted as a Christian church. Orientated east–west 'and set back slightly from the street intersection', the building is in the form of a 30 m long hall, possibly with an apsidal end, standing alone in an enclosed area (White and Barker 2000, 107–8). Subsequent evaluation of the building in 2005 was not able to confirm the apsidal end to the structure and also demonstrated that the floor had been quarried away in the fourth century. It is unlikely to be a church (White *et al.* 2013,

Rural temples: Coleshill

The temple of Coleshill in Warwickshire lies on the eastern slope of Grimstock Hill overlooking the flood plain of the River Cole (Magilton 2006; [Figure 11.1](#)). A number of either late Iron Age or early Romano-British roundhouses, associated with smithing hearths and domestic items such as pottery, spindle-whorls, querns and loom weights, represent the earliest activity on the site. The first ritual activity was focused on a pit that was later enclosed by the *cella* of a wooden rectangular temple building which may date to the early second century (Magilton 2006, 58–68). This was succeeded by a stone temple with an apse in its west wall and no ambulatory (*ibid*, 69–72).

At its most extensive, with the last modifications being made in the early fourth century, the complex consisted of the main temple building of the common ‘rectangle-within-a-rectangle’ plan, entered, as usual, from the east. Within the *temenos*, which was part-paved with cobbles, was a square building overlying the site of earlier ovens that may have had a ritual function, and an isolated apse that could have formed a backdrop for altars or statues. The *temenos* wall had an eastern entrance and, like all the buildings, was built of the local red sandstone. Outside, to the south, lay a small bath building (Magilton 2006, 72–84). There is little evidence for religious activity after the mid-fourth century. A fragmentary silver plaque from the site carries a representation of a martial figure, either Mars or Mercury, who may have been the deity worshipped at the temple (Lloyd-Morgan 2006). A notable pottery assemblage was recovered during the excavation, as was a limited but interesting small finds assemblage, including 30 brooches, pins, toilet implements and bracelets that were again probably *ex votos*. Unfortunately there was little that was diagnostic in the material to indicate the deity worshipped or the general practice of ritual on the site (Magilton 2006, 96–9).

Military temples: Rocester and wall

Rescue excavations by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at the site of Orton’s Pasture, Rocester, Staffordshire in 1995 uncovered the remains of two ditched enclosures, possibly annexes,

lying to the south of the Roman fort complex tested by excavation in 1965 and 1985–87 (Ferris, Bevan and Cuttler 2000). The southernmost of these enclosures contained a small building, subsequently interpreted as a shrine or small temple of a simple rectangular form (see Drury 1980 on non-classical temple buildings), adjacent to which were three pits, two very large and one small. These three pits contained between them, leaving aside quantities of coarse pottery, diagnostically religious material, including an altar fragment (Henig 2004, 50) and a pottery lamp. Environmental remains from the pits included Stone Pine (*Pinus Pinea*) nut shells and cone scales, charred date stones and a grape pip. Further Stone Pine remains came from the recuts of the enclosure ditch, along with fragments from a number of tazzas, a face pot and a triple jar. A ceramic lamp decorated with the figure of Bacchus and a panther also came from within the southern enclosure, while a decorated copper alloy *patera* handle, again bearing Bacchic motifs, and a significant concentration of small complete or largely complete green-glazed Roman vessels came from the northern enclosure (Figure 11.2). The activity at Orton's Pasture dates principally to the period c. AD 110–130/150, in other words contemporary with military activity to the north. The southern enclosure has been interpreted as the site of a Bacchic rustic shrine, perhaps established and maintained by military personnel from Rocester fort.

figures and a phallus (Henig 2004, 51–2, 55). A tenth reused stone, linked to *[Mars] Cocidius*, again attests to pre-*mansio* religious practice here.

Further religious evidence

According to the excavators, Frank and Nancy Ball (Ball and Ball 1987), Christian activity may be represented at Wall by an unprovenanced stone bearing a cross in a circle, another stone bearing a *chi-rho* monogram *in situ* in the wall of the stone courtyard building there, and the reported finding of a small bronze bowl in the 1920s, with a *chi-rho* in relief on the inside at the base. The bowl is now lost, but a watercolour of it is discussed by Symons (1995) and it is further discussed by C. F. Mawer in her survey of evidence for Christianity in Roman Britain as represented by small finds (Mawer 1995). For the West Midlands region, Mawer additionally lists a hoard of silver spoons from Biddulph, Staffordshire, a copper alloy buckle and plate decorated with a peacock, a tree of life and a swastika from Cave's Inn Farm, *Tripontium*, Warwickshire, and a copper alloy strap end decorated again with a peacock and tree of life from Kenchester, Herefordshire as Christian items, while she dismisses claims of a Christian context for a cremation urn with a painted cross on its side from Monk's Kirby, Warwickshire. To this list can be added a silver spoon from Pentrehyling with the inscription UTERE FELIX VIVAS – Use [this] happily and live [long !] – which can be interpreted as a Christian exhortation (Johns 2015).

The category of sites defined as sanctuaries perhaps requires some brief discussion here. These include Croft Ambrey and Donnington, both in Herefordshire, and probably also Bury Walls in Shropshire, and one or two other candidates such as Endale, Herefordshire (Keith Ray pers. comm.). Howard Williams has included Croft Ambrey in his list of Roman temples or shrines reusing prehistoric sites, in this case part of the Iron Age hillfort (Williams 1998, 73). Work at the site has further clarified the religious nature of the Romano-British activity here (Keith Ray, this volume). Could these Midlands' sanctuaries and others elsewhere in Britain be similar to sanctuaries in Gaul, where there is a lesser distinction made between religious and urban centres? Another notable and intriguing Romano-British reuse of an earlier, prehistoric site in the Midlands is attested at Bromfield, Shropshire

where a Roman marching camp's seemingly deliberate incorporation of a prehistoric barrow inside the circuit of its defences, when the monument would still have been a significant upstanding earthwork, might be interpreted as a ritual, if not necessarily a religious, act (Hughes *et al.* 1995).

Religion and ritual of course come together most significantly in burial and mortuary rites, but this subject lies outside the scope of this present review. Numerous other types of religious or ritual acts would have been carried out in contexts away from formal religious sites in the Roman world and one such example is briefly considered here: the excavated villa site of Berwick Alkmund Park, Shropshire where a small-scale evaluation was carried out in 1997 as part of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit's Wroxeter Hinterland Survey (Gaffney and White 2007, 201–3). While the site boasted substantial remains of a stone villa building the most curious find came from the backfill of one of the enclosure ditches around the complex. This consisted of 'a crudely sculpted stone carving, a simple figurine which was deposited face-down in the ditch fill when the buildings were demolished' according to Roger White (Gaffney and White 2007, 71–8; Henig 2004, 51), an evident rite of closure perhaps.

Conclusions

To summarise, there are relatively few religious sites known in the region, and yet those sites where excavation has taken place display an interesting range of temple types, from the classical temple at Wroxeter, through the Romano-Celtic temple at Coleshill, to the rustic shrine at Orton's Pasture, Rocester.

Finds also attest to the probable existence of a specialised healing shrine somewhere in Wroxeter, a site whose 'pull' would probably extend beyond the limits of any economic hinterland. Anatomical *ex votos* are not at all common site finds in Roman Britain (Ferris 1999; Ferris 2012, 60–76) and in fact there is a slight south-western bias in their occurrence, as indeed there is of healing shrines themselves. Only at Coleshill has a possible earlier, Iron Age use of the site been attested, although mention has been made of the so-called sanctuary sites such as Croft Ambrey. Good finds assemblages have been recovered from excavations at Wroxeter, Coleshill and Orton's Pasture, material which helps us to understand the functioning of these sites.

With the exception of the Orton's Pasture site, there is not much viable environmental data from religious sites in the region, the recovery of such material through a soil sampling campaign having added an extra dimension to the interpretation of that site (Lodwick 2015, 61–2).

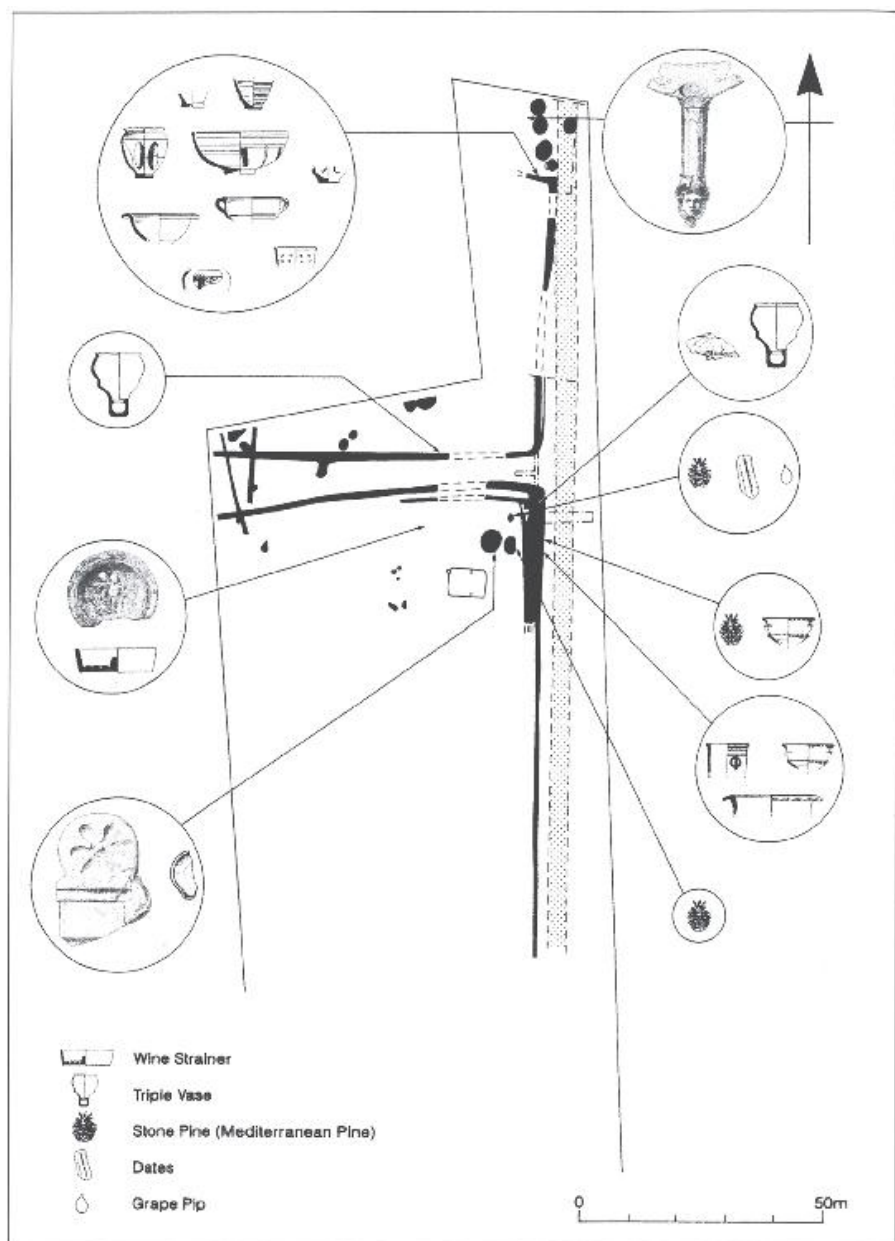


Figure 11.2 Orton's Pasture, Rochester, Staffordshire. Spatial distribution of possible religious/ritual material across the site (after Ferris et al. 2000, fig. 34; illustration by

Future research directions in the study of Roman religious sites in the region must be integrated with wider regional urban and rural research strategies. Religious material from Wroxeter and the smaller towns perhaps needs to be viewed also in the context of a broader consideration of urban art in Roman Britain (Ferris 2003; Ferris 2012, 94–115). The Coleshill temple publication has put on record information about this important West Midlands rural site. The archive from the Bushe-Fox excavations of the classical temple at Wroxeter, while not necessarily complete (Mike Stokes, pers. comm.), would surely repay re-examination, particularly the small finds and pottery, given that there was selective publication only of this material. A survey of artefacts of a religious or cultic function recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme in the region should also probably be a priority. Clarification through evaluation fieldwork of those sites whose religious function remains speculative or in doubt would again seem a sensible goal, followed up by research excavation at all sites verified by evaluation.

Results from work in the Midlands can be contextualised with reference to a number of published surveys devoted to Romano-British religion, both pagan and Christian (e.g. Barley and Hanson 1968; de la Bédoyère 2002; Cookson 1987; Henig 1984; 1989; Lewis 1965; Petts 2003; Rodwell 1980; Thomas 1981; and Watts 1991; 1998). The national research agendas' document *Britons and Romans* (James and Millett 2001) does not deal with religious sites as a distinct category, but rather it is stressed there how the study of such sites and their material culture can contribute towards many separate strands of research, including: examinations of transition from Iron Age to Romano-British periods and from later Roman Britain to Dark Age Britain; comparisons between urban and rural development; studies of the adoption of, or antipathy towards, new material culture; studies of environmental history (Lodwick 2015); and investigations of regional identities. This is undoubtedly true, but it is also true to say that the national dataset of Roman religious sites, to which the West Midlands can contribute quite significantly, is crying out for the kind of landscape-based study first advocated by Thomas Blagg in 1986 in his important paper 'Roman Religious Sites in the British Landscape'

(Blagg 1986), though perhaps one now also utilising GIS technologies.

Finally, it should not surely be viewed as over-ambitious to suggest that the national dataset could also undoubtedly be used as the basis for studies similar to those undertaken by Smith (2001) for southern Britain and particularly Ton Derks for Roman Gaul (1998), in which he used his material to explore, as his book's subtitle tells us, the transformation of religious ideas and values in his chosen area of study. Derks' view that Romanisation, if we still must use the term, can be equally understood through a study of religion as it can through analysis of 'changes in socio-political organization and economy' (Derks 1998, 1) is one that it is difficult to argue with.

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From the Provinces to the Marches: the West Midlands in the fifth and sixth centuries

Roger White

Introduction

In the discussion of the impact of the Roman Army on the region in an earlier chapter, the point was made that the arrival of the Roman army must have had a traumatic impact on the local population. In recent years, there has been a tendency to talk about the ‘transition’ from the late Roman society of the fourth century to the Anglo-Saxon one of the seventh, a semantic playing down of the potential and actual violence of the period which has been re-emphasised in recent work (Ward-Perkins 2005, 13–31). This reminds us that to people at the time, the change from one polity to another must have been at least as traumatic as the earlier invasion by Rome. It was not just the material impact of the collapse of the Roman economy which meant that it became increasingly difficult and ultimately impossible both to use coins and to acquire pottery, glassware and a myriad of other commodities that had been available during the Romano-British era. It was also that the whole West Midlands region, having been a relative backwater within the Diocese of Britannia with a population reflecting the regional traditions of the later Roman Empire, now found itself at the front line between two emerging cultural identities: the developing Brittonic community evolving from existing Romano-British society, and the incoming Germanic settlers. Even more unsettling will have been the obvious deterioration in the certainties

of urban and rural life, or of ordered ways of life determined by the Roman state as the fabric of society disintegrated. People were left in a state of uncertainty and did not know to whom they could turn for security. It is in this context that we see the rise of warbands and ultimately small kingdoms that characterise the early Middle Ages. Such warbands were led, one presumes, by former Romano-British elites, or incoming Germanic warriors. These developments provided the impetus for the fusing of the peoples of the region with incoming settlers to create new identities, a process with no certain outcome at the time and also one that has left very little archaeological trace.

While this period of change must have included violence and destruction, very little sign of that has been found in the archaeological record and is often assumed rather than proven. Indeed, where we have been able to locate sites relevant to this period, there is more sign of continuity in terms of landscape, land use and settlement than of disruption (Rippon *et al.* 2015). This is an important observation as it implies the survival of the existing Romano-British population who must, therefore, over time have ultimately adopted significant aspects of the cultural profile – language and material culture – of the incoming Germanic population. In essence, the West Midlands region is likely to have been one that could be characterised by the end of the period in terms of the ethnic origins of its general population as Anglo-British rather than Anglo-Saxon since it is very clear from the archaeological record that in this region at least, there was no great influx of Germanic settlers. We can be confident of this in the absence in this region of large cemeteries full of material that is culturally identified with the Anglo-Saxons, unlike the south and east of Britain.

Despite this we know that there was substantial change, at least politically, from the very fact of the emergence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, represented over the majority of the West Midlands region by Mercia. One way to interpret this process is to characterise it as a wholesale transformation brought about by the removal of one elite culture – the Roman – and its replacement by another – the Anglo-Saxon – leaving the underlying non-elite population relatively unscathed. While this is a convenient model, it is probably far too simplistic an analysis, not least because some of the elite in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms have British names hinting at more complex social

realities than simple wholesale replacement of elites.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the nature of the change seen in the fifth and sixth centuries in the region and how it is manifested in the archaeological record. It seeks to do so from the perspective of the Roman period, so as to explore and explain the collapse and transformation of Roman society, and whether one can characterise this archaeologically. It does not try to explore or characterise the parallel growth and evolution of Anglo-Saxon society since that is properly the focus of the next chronological volume in the frameworks series. This does not make for a neat cut-off for the period, but that is as it should be. Who could ever believe that history should be a neat and tidy process?

In one sense, the West Midlands is a key region for mapping this transition since it is clear archaeologically that certainly in the fifth century and probably through much of the sixth century, the emerging Anglo-Saxon culture is not manifest in the majority of the region. Where Anglo-Saxon evidence does occur – along the eastern margins of Staffordshire and Warwickshire and the southern edge of Worcestershire – it is highly visible as cemeteries and (to a lesser degree) settlements in contrast to the rest of the region (Hooke 2006, fig. 3.4 illustrates the point nicely). Why this might be so is discussed below, but the implication of this is that for these two centuries at least, the population over much of the region seemingly *maintained* a Roman-derived Brittonic identity and material culture that was different and distinct from the incoming culture. This point is emphasised because it is important to acknowledge that this is a cultural choice, equally as powerful as deciding to become an ‘Anglo-Saxon.’

This, of course, raises the interesting possibility that where Germanic settlers did move into areas where Brittonic material culture and identity was dominant, they may have been acculturated to a Brittonic identity: it was very likely to have been a two-way traffic and one need not assume that the outcome was pre-determined in favour of the Germanic identity. While the West Midlands region was, therefore, a frontier zone between the nascent Brittonic polities and the emerging polities to the east which became the Mercian kingdom, this zone was broadly defined, permeable and fluid ([Figure 12.1](#)). This two-way process of acculturation offers a critical opportunity for the

examination of sites that archaeologically display their separate development, but also the interaction between these communities.

The following sections seek first to explore the intellectual context of study for this period and then establish the methodological issues that concern it. A brief chronological narrative is then offered, before consideration of the current understanding of the archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries in the West Midlands region. A concluding section suggests strategies for continuing to gather further data to help advance the research agenda.

Intellectual context

Study of the fifth/sixth-century transition has become an area of research in its own right and there is now a considerable literature exploring the conceptual issues that have been raised (Fleming 2010; Gerrard 2013; Halsall 2013). In a recent volume dedicated to an examination of the current thinking around the ‘end’ of Roman Britain in AD 410, Simon Esmonde Cleary has lucidly set out the evolution of the intellectual framework for study of the period, identifying the 1970s as the key period for the delineation of the subject area (Esmonde Cleary 2014). Despite the very real progress he outlines, there are real issues still to contend with, not the least of which is the enduring poverty of the data set available to study. As he points out, it is the major research projects of the 1960s and 70s that, by and large, produced the data sets upon which we now work. The scale of these is, however, unlikely to be repeated in an age dominated by developer funding and the short-term mitigation of development.

There is a two-fold danger here in that archaeologists working on development projects, even large-scale infrastructure ones, are not necessarily working at an appropriate scale to recognise the archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries. This is because infrastructure projects tend to be narrow and linear whereas what is required to identify and understand sites of this period are large-scale open areas. Even where larger areas are available for study, time and lack of resource usually demand only a sampling strategy that is unlikely to yield or recognise results. Second, those undertaking the work do not usually have the time or opportunity to keep abreast of the research debates that will enable them to recognise the archaeology of the period. Instead, they are expected to keep informed

across the whole spectrum of archaeology rather than one subject area. In the cut-throat world of developer-funded projects, the all too real danger is that there is not the time to observe and absorb the subtleties of the archaeology which has been such a feature of those sites where the fleeting traces of fifth- and sixth-century structures have been observed (Salisbury 2002, xi). It is no accident that the key sites of the era across England (Mucking, Wasperton, Wroxeter, Catholme, West Stow, West Heslerton, Crickley Hill, Yeavinger, Silchester, *et al.*) share a common methodological quirk of the excavation team actually living on the site of the excavation, allowing them to observe, think about and record the nuances they observe under all kinds of conditions and times. This is not how commercial archaeology is done now, however, and this poses a real problem for curatorial archaeologists writing briefs under which developer-funded archaeology happens. Digging teams rightly demand suitable conditions in which to work. They cannot be expected to camp out on site as used to be done in the past, but this inevitably leads to less familiarity with the site being excavated, and the consequent danger that evidence of this particular period might be missed in consequence.

That said, in the right circumstances developer-funded projects can produce appropriate evidence. The case of the Cross Keys Site in Lichfield is an excellent example. Here, a site in the centre of the city was identified for development as a two-storey car park. A late design-change introduced a basement element to the development a mere two weeks before excavation was about to start, necessitating a rapid rewrite of the archaeological brief by the county archaeologist Stephen Dean. Five evaluation trenches and topsoil stripping under a watching brief quickly identified the site as having high potential for surviving archaeological remains and so a 440 m² open-area excavation was initiated for the foot-print of the building, alongside a watching brief elsewhere on the site (Sargent 2013, 6–8). The results spectacularly justified the decisions taken, uncovering evidence for a millennium of occupation extending from the fifth to the sixteenth century. The earliest phase included a 5m-long stone-built, clay-plastered two-cell structure with a sunken floor apparently built in the Roman period (a radiocarbon determination of AD 89–334 at 95% confidence was obtained from a twig in the walls; *ibid*, 7) but used in

the fifth to seventh centuries as crop deposits on the floor within the building were ^{14}C dated to AD 436–636 at 95% confidence (*ibid*, 12; [Figure 12.2](#)). The next phase, of two sub-phases, comprised the destruction of this building by fire and the construction of a sunken-floored building partially reusing one wall of the earlier structure. This was dated to AD 688–868 at 95% confidence (*ibid*, 13) and was followed by a reconstruction to the same foot-print that was dated to AD 779–971 and AD 684–965 at 95% confidence (*ibid*, 15). This second structure also appears to have burnt down. The function of both buildings was unclear but storage of agricultural produce was a possibility. The subsequent four phases are of less interest here, but are important nonetheless for our understanding of the development of Lichfield. Dating was determined by radiocarbon sampling, which was fortunate as no artefacts appear to have been identified as belonging to these early phases (Sargent 2013). The implications of this important excavation will be discussed below.

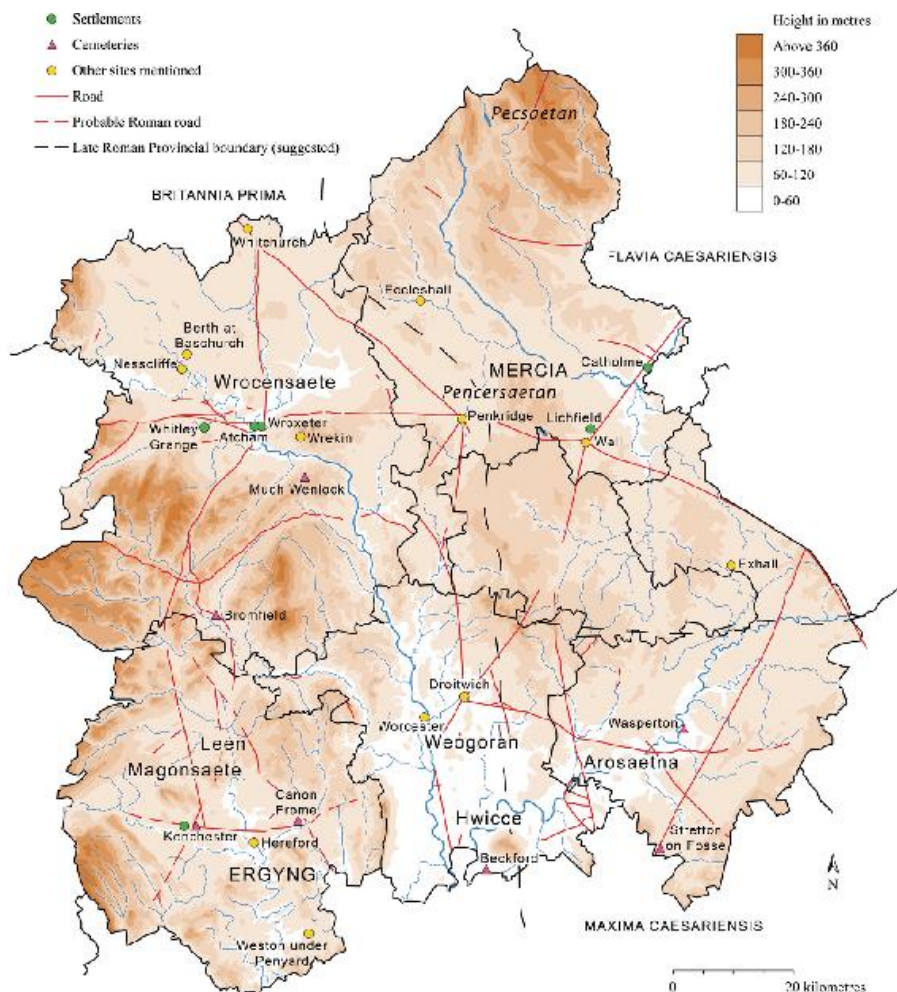
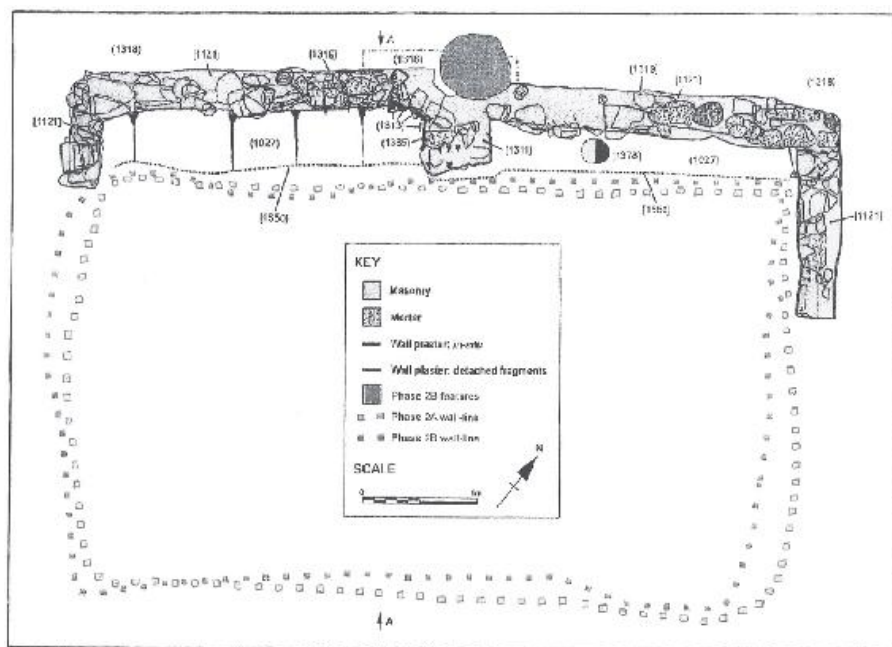


Figure 12.1 Map of West Midlands region in the fifth – sixth centuries showing sites mentioned in the text (Drawn by Lou Buglass)

Methodological issues

In dealing with the archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries, archaeologists have to contend with very real methodological and evidential problems. Perhaps the most obvious is the problem of actually locating sites of this date. A very recent synthesis can only cite three sites in western England that demonstrate evidence of low-status Brittonic habitation: Poundbury in Dorset, Trethurgy in Cornwall and Tatton Park in Cheshire (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 10; the Cross Keys site is not included in the list). Even if you include those villa sites with evident post-Roman occupation which can be assumed to be of this date (such as Whitley Grange, Shropshire, Brean Down in

Somerset and Frocester Court and Barnsley Park in Gloucestershire), we are still talking about fewer than ten sites (*ibid.*, 9–10; Price 2000, 111–8). This issue is caused by a number of factors. First is that if one has a site that continues in occupation from the Roman period into the fifth or sixth century, how does one recognise that occupation and date it? Since, as we shall see, there are few diagnostic finds of this date, the tendency will always be to err on the side of caution: proving that a late Roman site has extended into the post-Roman Brittonic period will always be problematic if all one has to go on are what look to be just Roman artefacts. However, recent analysis of some late assemblages on Hadrian's Wall and in the north more generally have been able to demonstrate that fifth-century assemblages can comprise material that is entirely fourth century in date, but which favour some categories of artefacts over others and thus produces a distinct assemblage that is of a different composition than would be expected in a fourth-century assemblage (Cool 2000). Such conclusions have been valuable in identifying even small excavated assemblages in the region, such as that at Whitley Grange villa (Gaffney and White 2007, 141; [Figure 12.3](#)) and in encouraging studies that demonstrate the reuse and recycling of Roman artefacts into the post-Roman period (Swift 2012; 2014).



The second methodological issue in recognising the Brittonic archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries is that the collapse of the Roman economy in the later Roman period meant that the distinctive technology of Roman building methods ceased to exist. Instead of stonework, ceramic tiles, mortar, plaster and mosaics, vernacular architecture reverted to timber, clay and other organic materials (Barker *et al.* 1997, 169–70). The change is seen most clearly at Wroxeter, but also at sites like Whitley Grange (Figure 12.4). Allied with the use of these materials came a propensity to reuse elements of Roman-period buildings, producing a hybrid type of structure built within the ruins of Roman-period structures. Buildings like this are known elsewhere in formerly Roman Britain, often pejoratively being called ‘squatter occupation’. Such terminology is unhelpful since what is clearly happening here is a choice to use renewable and readily available resources given the impossibility of finding more permanent architectural materials and people who knew how to use them (White 2007, 169–72). Intriguingly, it is a phenomenon seen elsewhere in the former Roman Empire, as for example in sixth- and seventh-century Luni, Italy or Iol Caesarea, Algeria. In these places, the phenomenon is manifest at a later date than in Britain as the pressures seen in Britain were repeated in the collapse of late Roman urban society in the core of the Empire (Potter 1995; Ward-Perkins 2005, 124–7; Wickham 2005, 644–50). The main point, of course, is that archaeologically structures of timber and clay are much more difficult to recognise than those of conventional Roman or native British design (i.e. stone-founded or post-built roundhouses). As has been demonstrated at Wroxeter, earth-fast construction was not always in evidence – of the 75 buildings listed in the Wroxeter building catalogue, 28 appeared to be timber-framed or part timber-framed leading to only vestigial traces being seen when large areas were stripped (Barker *et al.* 1997, 172–91). As discussed elsewhere, the problems of identifying and appreciating such structures has been evidenced at Wroxeter by the failure of Kathleen Kenyon to recognise one late structure on *insula* IX and Atkinson’s reluctance to give credence to what were clearly other, similar ephemeral buildings on the forum site (*insula* IV) (White and Barker 1997, 127).

The third issue relates to the problem of dating. It has become increasingly clear that the only possible way to achieve a reliable and effective dating for sites in the fifth and sixth centuries is high-precision AMS radiocarbon dating allied with Bayesian statistical modelling (Krus 2016). Its application at Cross Keys has already been highlighted, while at Wasperton it has enabled the excavators to date a long and complex sequence of burials demonstrating developing social relationships between the existing and incoming populations evolving over more than 200 years (Hamilton *et al.* 2009, 45–8). It is hoped that the application of this technology in the near future to the Wroxeter Baths Basilica archive will, at last, enable that sequence to be comprehensively and securely dated (Bayliss, Hammon and White, forthcoming). Two other forms of scientific dating can also be used. The first, remanent magnetic dating, has been less successfully applied due to the poor quality of samples obtained and associated problems with levels of confidence. Sites and sequences relying on this technology alone need to be treated cautiously in respect of their dates (Lane 2014). The second technology, which has not been applied for sites of this date in the region but has been used with some success on Iron Age and Roman sites in Shropshire is optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating (Schwenninger 2016). Both remanent magnetic dating and OSL dating results should ideally be calibrated against the more reliable radiocarbon dating method (e.g. Krus 2016). Another form of scientific dating, dendrochronology, has not been applied to sites of this date in the region since suitable samples have not been forthcoming but where samples do occur, it is a very reliable means of dating (Baillie 1995).



Figure 12.3 A Romano-British bracelet fragment, glass bead and jet bead fragment from Whitley Grange, Shropshire. A typical fifth-century assemblage (Photograph: Graham Norrie)

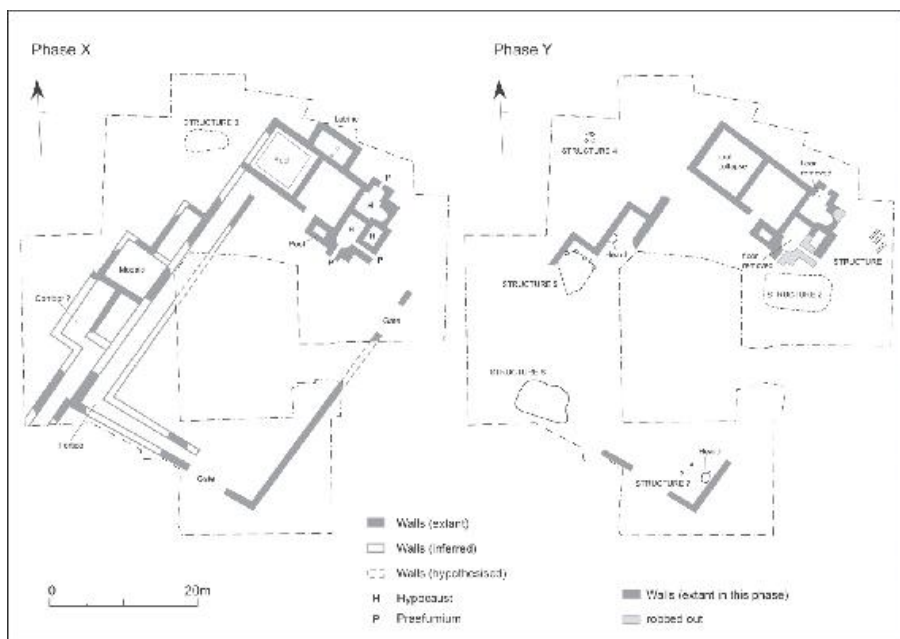


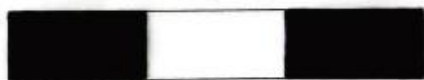
Figure 12.4 Reconstruction of the villa phase (X) and of the post-Roman occupation (Y) at Whitley Grange villa (after White 2007, fig. 51; drawn by Bryony Ryder)

In consideration of the issues and problems already outlined, it is

patently obvious that any excavation dealing with suspected archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries must have provision for a robust range of scientific dating written into the brief as standard. This does not mean that every excavation of this date will be capable of being scientifically dated – that will only happen if suitable material for dating is retrieved – but it does at least alert funders of the need to make provision for the relatively high costs of such processes within the design stage of a project.

So far, the focus in this section has been on the largely negative impacts of the archaeology of the fifth and sixth centuries. In balance, it is also pertinent to outline some of the positive impacts that are beginning to emerge from a sustained research focus on the period. The first is the growing realisation that there is a problem in the first place. This has been important in focusing attention on those areas that need to be understood in order to progress studies. This includes research into artefacts so that fifth- and sixth-century cultural material can be identified and categorised. In this the Portable Antiquities Scheme has been invaluable: one need only consider how far our interest and awareness of early Anglo-Saxon society has been sharpened through the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard to realise this (Staffordshire Hoard Symposium; Symons 2014; Hunt 2016, 40–1). However, focus on the hoard has obscured many other significant discoveries in the region including, in Shropshire alone, a Brittonic gold ring (Reavill 2012; [Figure 12.5a](#)) and an Anglo-Saxon gold and garnet pendant (Reavill 2010; [Figure 12.5b](#)). It is clear that discoveries made under the scheme have the potential to revolutionise our understanding of the material culture of the period, although sadly the lack of context of many of these objects hampers the impact they might have on developing an understanding of dating. As a demonstration of this, the discovery on the Wroxeter Baths Basilica site of stratified late fourth- or early fifth-century penannular brooches and dress pins of probable fifth- or sixth-century date (given their parallels in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of that date; White 2007, 20–4; Pretty 1997, 207–12, fig. 310) are potentially of far more value in understanding and developing a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of such artefacts than just finding stray examples with metal detectors.

To be able to put such finds into context, it is important to continue to excavate sites of the period to maximise the potential of the data recovered. The same point can also be made about environmental evidence. While there have been some significant studies in the more integrated and well-resourced excavations, such as at Wroxeter Baths Basilica (Charles *et al.* 1997; Gale 1997), a great deal more needs to be done to characterise the evidence for the environment across the West Midlands. The lack of work in the region generally is apparent in the survey carried out by Stephen Rippon and his team in looking at the evidence for the transitional landscape from Roman Britain to early medieval England. Their concluding discussion of the 20-page section on the 18 *pays* of the Western Lowlands that include the West Midlands region studied in this volume, offers the following comment:



0

3cm

Figure 12.5 A Brittonic gold ring (HESH-B61048) and an Anglo-Saxon gold-and-garnet pendant (HESH-842BC5), both found in Shropshire (Photographs under Creative Commons licence for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum)

Archaeologically, relatively little is known about early medieval settlements and their associated landscapes and there are fewer examples of excavated late Roman boundaries whose relationship with the historic landscape can

be determined (particularly in the north of the region, which is unfortunate as this area has excellent palaeoenvironmental evidence). The low number of sites within most individual pays makes statistical analysis at this level meaningless, although across the region as a whole 59 per cent of excavated Romano-British field systems within areas of historic landscape of medieval character show potential continuity. (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 304)

What has become increasingly clear as research has continued on this period is that the West Midlands is one of the key regions for studying the ‘Anglicisation’ culturally (and what this term might infer) of the (Romano-) British peoples of the region, in the same way that it was ideal as a place to study the onset and progress of Romanisation, as was demonstrated by the Wroxeter Hinterland Project. The premise of that project was that it was much easier to detect the process of Romanisation in the central Severn Valley because so little Roman cultural material had penetrated into the area before the conquest (Gaffney and White 2007, 16). The same is true of the West Midlands in the fifth and sixth centuries, another period when an incoming, strongly defined and archaeologically distinctive material culture, exhibited through both treatment of the dead and its vernacular architecture, is viewed in contrast to a contemporary culture that is so much less obviously characterised that it is often described as ‘invisible’. This being the case, integrated archaeological research such as that at Wroxeter (Barker *et al.* 1997) and Wasperton (Carver *et al.* 2009) demonstrate all too clearly both the complexity of the evidence, and the nuanced understanding that it is possible to achieve. It is worth remembering that the emergence of a new ‘Frontier people’ – Mercians – is not an historically recorded process. It can only be reconstructed, and even then only opaquely, through an interdisciplinary approach using all available evidence: archaeology, history, linguistics, place-names, environmental evidence and scientific analysis. This calls for a team-based approach, and one that needs to be in place at the outset rather than being assembled after the event. Similarly, the archaeological sequence at Wroxeter, however it is actually interpreted, records in an imperfect manner the voice of the ‘invisible’, the vanquished and vanished population of post-Roman Britain.

Establishing a tentative narrative

While we can never hope to understand fully the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England, one can see glimpses of the process that allow an outline understanding of the broad trends of development. The first point to make is that initially, Roman power will have continued to be expressed by whatever provincial structures or personnel remained in place since there was no reason not to believe in the early fifth century that Roman power would be re-established. This was probably quite a short-lived phase – perhaps only a single generation. Beyond that point, perhaps around AD 430–50, although the former provincial boundaries of *Britannia* may still have been in place, each province was increasingly seeking to survive and defend itself. It may be that it was at this point that the difference between the eastern margin of the West Midlands region and the remainder of the region was established since, even if the provincial structures had been lost, the perceptions of existing boundaries would still have been in place.

If this was indeed the case, and each province was effectively dealing with its own defence, then the settlement of Germanic incoming groups on the eastern fringes of the West Midlands region could reflect deliberate placement of mercenary forces to defend the western borders of the provinces of *Maxima Caesariensis* (roughly south-eastern England but extending up to Warwickshire and Worcestershire) and *Flavia Caesariensis* (roughly Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and the eastern parts of Warwickshire and Staffordshire) (see [Figure 12.1](#)). The lack of Germanic settlement in neighbouring *Britannia Prima* is explained in this model by the suggestion that their mercenary troops were provided not from Germanic tribes but from Ireland, as perhaps evidenced by the Cunorix stone at Wroxeter (Wright and Jackson 1968). Notwithstanding, one cannot rule out the possibility that some Germanic troops may also have been serving in Brittonic areas, as was clearly the case with the ‘Gloucester Goth’ (White 2007, 196–201). Fundamentally, the difference between the area that was formerly *Britannia Prima* and the other elements of Roman Britain was that incoming elements were assimilated into the existing population, in contrast to the rest of England. Elsewhere there was a process of ‘Anglicisation’ of the native population that owes more to assimilation, acculturation and the gradual domination of an Anglian

elite, itself merging with British elites, rather than a dynamic based upon a heavy influx of incoming Anglo-Saxon settlers.

The next phase would be a further stage in which the former Roman provinces fragmented into individual centres of power, the towns and cities emerging as separate Brittonic or Anglo-British polities. In the former province of *Britannia Prima* the agency for this is likely to have been the British Church which will have been keen to maintain social cohesion and the Romano-British elites, reinvented as warlords. Both will have relied on existing centres of population for their power base. In our region, this is perhaps most clearly seen in Herefordshire where the early kingdom of Ergyng appears to have emerged around AD 450 and to have survived until around AD 650, its location centred on the iron-working centre at *Ariconium*, later known as Archenfield. Another emerging Brittonic centre was in northern Herefordshire, in the area known as Lene, near Leominster which may have been its focus (Ray 2015, 207–9). Such emerging polities were opposed by a gradually coalescing Mercian kingdom, whose identity by this time may have been Anglo-British but which presumably had a largely pagan identity, although possibly with Brittonic Christian enclaves signed by place-names such as Eccles (see below). Their focus of power is likely to have been rural communities and newly established centres, such as Lichfield, a Mercian centre located close to, but distinct from, the former Roman / Brittonic centre at Wall, established away from, but close to, existing Brittonic enclaves. This mosaic of emerging polities is likely to have been very fluid and it certainly cannot be assumed that there was an automatic conflict between Brittonic and Anglo-Saxon controlled areas. The evidence of the seventh century indicates that the Mercian kings could as readily ally themselves with the Brittonic kingdoms Powys and Gwynedd against other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, such as Northumbria, suggesting closer links than might otherwise be assumed (Barker *et al.* 1997, 241–5; Ray and Bapty 2016, 95–104).

Again using the timescale of generational change, this process may have begun at the very end of the fifth and into the early sixth century. The attested existence of the *Wrocensaetnan*, *Magonsaetan* and *Pencersaetan* in the *Tribal Hidage* (a document perhaps to be dated to the late seventh century) may record some of these entities. These three names refer to ‘the people (Old English *saete*) of’ (respectively)

Wroxeter (*Viroconium*), Kenchester (*Magnis*) and Water Eaton (*Pennocrucium*), who were established enough to be recognised by the Mercian king and his power structures as subordinate polities based on former Roman entities. They are, significantly, identified by their Roman names unlike, for example, the people in and around Worcester (the *ceaster* (i.e. walled town) of the *Weogoran*), emphasising a continuing (and acknowledged) Roman identity. It has been further argued that the territory of the *Wreconsaetnan* is roughly coincident with a shadowy territory known as Tren / Ercall / Cound which is evidenced in place-names located in Wroxeter's hinterland (Barker *et al.* 1997, 242; Bassett 1992). The genesis of this territory may be the *territorium* of the former Roman city.

Further to the west, where Brittonic as opposed to Roman identities were stronger, it is possible that centres of power were building around re-occupied hillforts, as is attested in Powys and Gwynedd and, to the south, possibly in Herefordshire (Ray 2015, 207) and, more conclusively, in Somerset and Gloucestershire (White 2007, 168–75). Although it is tempting to see in this the re-emergence of long-buried Iron Age tribal elites (Laycock 2008), this interpretation is highly unlikely since there had been no social mechanism for transmitting the identity of Iron Age tribal elites over the four centuries of Roman rule (Pearce 2004, 223–5).

This narrative is no more than an interpretation of the current evidence. If we wish to understand more of this story, we need to find and excavate more sites. However, to understand them fully we will need the full panoply of research tools available to us, and research briefs need to recognise this so as to enable the resourcing of such work.

Characterising the archaeological evidence

In this section we will seek to outline the known set of site types. These are quite restricted and it is clear that there must have been others that can be anticipated or even suspected.

Settlements

In one respect we are fortunate that settlement both in Brittonic and Germanic areas often appears to be located on existing or previously

occupied sites, a trend that has been widely observed in detailed studies (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 30–4). In Brittonic areas, this includes Roman urban sites, notably Wroxeter but also other urban centres such as Kenchester (Ray 2015, 201), Worcester and Wall but in Mercian regions it includes new centres, such as Lichfield or Hereford (Ray 2015, 212–5). Other small urban centres are also likely to have survived, as has been argued for Whitchurch and Penkridge (Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2014, 53–5). The survival of these urban centres into the fifth century was as established centres of power and local economy that had potential as focus points for developing polities, but a new impetus to survival may also have been provided through the church, which will have been keen to maintain the late Roman pattern of ecclesiastical organisation based on towns and cities even while those cities died around them (Esmonde Cleary 2013, 431–5).

At the moment, proving this is quite another matter, as is establishing how long any occupation continued. So far only Wroxeter has provided extensive evidence that enables some characterisation of the settlement archaeology of the period. At Kenchester, the blocking of one of the gateways and remetalling of road surfaces suggests the continuing existence of some form of organised civic administration (Ray 2015, 201). The problem is that there is rarely the opportunity in developer-funded excavation to replicate the elaborate, careful and slow approach to excavation seen at Wroxeter. There is also the issue that at Wroxeter it was the depth of stratigraphy that signalled the longevity of occupation more than the artefacts. The implications of this are that those excavating in existing late Roman centres and rural sites in the region need to be alert to the potential for fifth-century occupation and maximise the scope both for sampling to carry out scientific dating and for in-depth analysis of the cultural material recovered: the Cross Keys excavation in Lichfield demonstrates an excellent example of just such an approach.

In seeking other Brittonic site types of fifth- and sixth-century date, other possibilities that can be suggested include production sites, such as Droitwich, whose salt continued to be a major resource. Here the parallel with Cheshire's salt industry is instructive. Inscriptions on late Roman lead pans from Northwich and Shavington (Nantwich) refer to named individuals who are given the titles of *Cler* and *[Epis]copi* –

respectively ‘Cleric’ and ‘Bishop’ – implying the involvement of the late Roman church (Shotter 2005); it is possible that attested medieval control of the Bishop of Worcester over Droitwich’s salt was established at this time (Maddicott 2005). It is less likely that there was the scope to exploit raw materials through mining so as to meet the needs for iron, bronze, lead and other materials. Instead, it is quite probable that scavenging abandoned Roman sites will have met most needs (Swift 2012). It is also likely that there was an increasing interest in sites that were capable of being strongly defended by a small number of men. This is reflected in the poetic and historic tradition of both Anglo-Saxon and Brittonic / Welsh poets who name hillforts as potential centres of fifth- and sixth-century power (e.g. Baschurch, Shropshire) (Rowland 1990). Other hillforts that have produced late Roman material, such as Nesscliffe, also in Shropshire, could potentially have been refortified (White 2007, 135). The opportunity to excavate such sites, however, is likely to be limited to small-scale research projects rather than commercial opportunities.



Figure 12.6 The west wall of Building 31, Wroxeter Baths Basilica excavations, 1975; looking south (Photograph: Philip Barker)

Anglo-Saxon settlements have proved elusive over the area. This may simply be because many of them are still in occupation (as for

example at Atcham, Shropshire; Hannaford 2000). The example at Catholme in Staffordshire (Losco-Bradley and Kinsley 2002) demonstrates strong landscape continuity with Roman precursors and a preference for lighter, free-draining soils, but remains an isolated example that cannot be assumed to be typical of the settlements of Staffordshire let alone the rest of the region. The fact that it is relatively easy to identify Anglo-Saxon settlements through their use of sunken-floored buildings (SFB) and halls constructed from earth-fast posts is an advantage. What little we know of such settlements suggests there is little sign of social stratification or complexity in terms of production. The evidence, as with the Brittonic sites, suggests a subsistence level of economy. The Cross Keys site in Lichfield can perhaps be considered as a rural settlement too, at least in its earliest phases, since the evidence suggests an agricultural use for the buildings there (although see next section). Here, there is the unique example of a stone-built structure evidently in use, if not built, in the Brittonic period that is then reused as a conventional SFB. To the list of potential parallels for the post-Roman stone building offered in the report, the example of Building 31 on the Baths Basilica, Wroxeter is a notable addition to the meagre list: this may have been a slightly larger structure – it was a minimum of 5.6 m but could have been up to 11 m in length and, like the Cross Keys structure, it was built entirely of stone (as demonstrated by its collapsed west wall) although in this case it was mortared rather than clay-bonded (Barker *et al.* 1997, 146 A126 & A131; [Figure 12.6](#)).

Cemeteries and religious sites

It can be anticipated that in Brittonic areas at least there is potential for the discovery of Christian sites, whether churches or monastic sites. Some have been argued for on historical or documentary grounds (e.g. Bassett 1989) and others on place-name evidence while the only contender archaeologically is the Cross Keys structure which includes a church building among its possible interpretations in its earliest phase (Sargent 2013, 23–5). A classic example is the *eccles* names, such as Eccleshall, Staffordshire and Exhall, Warwickshire, names derived from the Latin for Christian community, discussed in detail by Charles Thomas (1981, 147–8, 262–5). These presumably, but not certainly, had associated settlements. The discovery of

inhumations radiocarbon-dated to the fifth century at Barrow Street, Much Wenlock, Shropshire appears to be a rare instance of a Brittonic burial site of the period and has been linked to the foundation in the seventh century of a monastic community by King Merewalh on the site of the later Priory. Claims that the remains underlying the later Priory were late Roman or post-Roman Brittonic in origin have been dismissed but further research would be of high value (Woods 1987; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1988). Cemeteries remain extremely rare in Brittonic areas. In addition to the burials already mentioned at Much Wenlock, others have been found at Kenchester (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 172) and at Wroxeter, including roadside burials found by Atkinson (1942, 112–3), another on the Baths Basilica site (Barker *et al.* 1997, 167–8) and the one presumably attested by the tombstone of Cunorix (c. AD 500) that was found on the ramparts of the former town (Wright and Jackson 1968). Herefordshire has provided the best evidence regionally for cemeteries of this period (Ray 2015, 202–4). In addition to the burial at Kenchester noted above, at Dewsall Court, close to the church of St David, a number of inhumations have been dated to the sixth and seventh centuries. In the Frome valley, work at a cemetery situated to the west of the Roman settlement at Canon Frome / Ashperton located Romano-British burials, two still in their wooden coffins. One of the graves has been dated to the sixth or seventh century. Lastly, two isolated male burials were found outside a cave near Symonds Yat in the south of the county. One dates to the fourth or fifth century, the other is about a century later.

In contrast to the growing evidence for the influence of Christianity in the West Midlands region, especially in the Brittonic areas, Gelling has pointed to the existence of Anglo-Saxon pagan sites in the region, such as Wednesbury, Staffordshire, a place-name suggesting a combination of a religious focus and a fortified site, although our present state of archaeological knowledge precludes certainty in this interpretation (Gelling 1992, 92–4).

It is with Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, however, that we have our strongest evidence for the transition from Romano-British communities to the adoption of an Anglo-Saxon identity. Cemeteries where there appears to be transition from one period to the other include Stretton-on-Fosse (Ford 2003) and Wasperton (Carver *et al.* 2009, 132–3). Further west, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are rare. Those at

Beckford, Worcestershire and Bromfield, Shropshire are of interest in demonstrating a typical trait of the period: the reuse of existing earthwork monuments in the landscape as a form of appropriation (Evison and Hill 1996, 39–40; Stanford 1995; Carver *et al.* 2009, 135). Both cemeteries appropriated Bronze Age barrow cemeteries and, in Bromfield's case, an Iron Age enclosure site.

Linear earthworks

Recent excavations have highlighted the possibility that elements at least of Wat's Dyke and even Offa's Dyke may have been created in the fifth and sixth centuries rather than in the eighth century as is currently thought (Hannaford 1998; *Current Archaeology* 2014; Ray and Bapty 2016, 19–23). This potentially makes the interpretation of these monuments even more problematic and they cannot be viewed simply as frontiers separating hostile communities. Despite the enormous amount of research already carried out on them (Hill and Worthington 2003; Ray and Bapty 2016), there is still potential for further work, especially where opportunities present themselves for modern dating. The date of other dykes, such as the Rowe Ditch in Herefordshire, remain uncertain although it is clearly post-Roman in date (Ray 2015, 209–10).

Cultural material

The continuing research into characterising the finds of the fifth and sixth centuries, especially from the Brittonic cultural zone, remains a high priority but is hampered by the lack of poor dating overall. However, recognition of certain traits in Roman assemblages that hint at the curation of artefacts and their reuse are strong indicators of occupation beyond the conventional end of Roman Britain (Swift 2012). Appreciation of simple indicators, such as riveted pottery, reworked artefacts such as bracelets and certain varieties of penannular brooches are strong markers for post-Roman Brittonic sites and can be used as signals to prioritise efforts to date sites scientifically where these artefacts occur (Dickinson 1982; Swift 2014). Similarly, PAS finds spots that are of this date should be given high priority for further investigation.

Research priorities

From the discussion it is clear that the key to making further progress in this difficult period is to prioritise opportunities for scientific dating, and for environmental work. Without these core components it is almost impossible to make sense of any archaeological site of the period: interpretation becomes guesswork. The most important dating methods to consider, in order of importance, are AMS radiocarbon dates, dendrochronology, OSL dating and remanent magnetic dating. It is possible that if more examples of the last form of dating can be secured then the statistical reliability of this dating method will improve.

Where sites of this date have been located, it is also clear that large areas need to be opened up if we are to have any chance of understanding the evidence, or even seeing it in the first place. This poses challenges in terms of sampling strategies and the low profit margins inherent in commercial archaeology but if curatorial archaeologists are aware of the need for this approach and implement it then we will make progress. Equally, it is also clear that detailed finds analysis of cultural material recovered from excavations is another key method of recognising post-Roman occupation. This may mean that in some instances sites are being recognised after they have been excavated rather than during the process. That being so, it is sensible to try and involve finds specialists as early as possible in the process of assessment, and preferably when there is still the opportunity to intervene on site.

Cemetery evidence remains one of the key areas for study since it offers scope not only for the recovery of cultural material but also, more importantly, for scientific dating. Unfortunately, over much of the area soil conditions are not good for the preservation of bone, hampering also the study of animal resources, but where cemeteries can be identified or have been found, again scientific analysis, including genetic characterisation, isotope analysis and radiocarbon dating, is a high priority.

It is notable that, despite the collapse of the elite economy of Roman Britain in the course of the fifth century, there is a basic continuity in the landscape which argues for closer attention to the possibility of finding settlements of this period under existing houses and villages, as at Atcham (Hannaford 2000). This may be one of the

reasons why it is so difficult to locate sites of this period, and why curators need to be aware of this possibility when considering developments in existing settlements.

One final conclusion about this period that must be stressed above all, however, is that the fifth and sixth (and seventh) centuries present a highly fragmented and localised picture. As Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews correctly asserts ‘the most overwhelming feature of the little data for the Britons of this period that exists (or at least has been recognised and published) is its sheer diversity. There is no single pattern that can be applied across the former Roman Diocese.’ One can only agree with him that ‘the approach taken by the English Heritage- [Historic England] sponsored Regional Research Frameworks for England offers the best hope for exploration of the issues raised here’ (Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2014, 56).

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